





## ITALY TO-DAY







A Sir Frank Fox  
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# ITALY TO-DAY

BY  
SIR FRANK FOX

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## FOREWORD

**N**OT the museum Italy, but the new Fascist Italy—trying out a philosophy which is, in its theory, old as Plato, in its practical application old as the Roman Republic, but to our generation seems so new as to be from some aspects almost inhuman—is the subject of this book.

Of the museum Italy, its picture galleries, its monuments, its ruins, there are so many books—mostly admirable, some otherwise, tinged with a more or less conscious regard of the Italian people as of picturesque lizards among their historic stones—that it would need boldness to suggest that there is need of another. But the new Italy, engaged in an experiment in the conduct of human affairs, the issue of which is of the first importance to civilisation, deserves study from every aspect. Its political, industrial,

## FOREWORD

economic and educational systems would each justify a volume if treated in detail. A detailed examination I shall not attempt, but rather seek to give a general impression of a nation which is being governed to-day on lines curiously suggestive of those ruling an English Public School, with the same worship of the community spirit and of the community type, with some of the same petty tyrannies as to "form" and behaviour, and with the same high spirit of emulation and endeavour for "the good of the school"—the school of yesterday, of to-day and of to-morrow: and to give also some impression of the remarkable personality who is at once Head Master and Head Boy.

The world since the Great War has witnessed two great revolutionary movements, the Bolshevik in Russia, the Fascist in Italy. The former has claimed far more attention because of its lurid horrors: yet represents in fact not so great a departure as the latter from what, by historical deduction, one would judge the norm of development of human society.

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In the Middle Ages there grew up a religious sect called the Albigenses, the central belief of whom was that the Devil had equal power with God over Mankind. The orthodox theologians of the day exterminated this Albigenses heresy with the stake and the gallows. But the Albigenses were, perhaps, wrong only in the degree of the power they attributed to the Devil, who certainly can put a finger into our human affairs, and can fairly be given the responsibility for the fact that there is normally latent in our human nature the germ of the disease of mad destructiveness. Many show at intervals symptoms of the fevers it causes. Even the infant in arms is at moments a little Bolshevik. The baby who, when mother will not let him eat the soap, kicks and screams, and tries to bash his little head against the floor is Bolshevising. He is "fed up", and wants to hurt and to smash, even himself, because thwarted in the demand for something which would be an evil if obtained. Not a few grown-up people have their spasms of Bolshevism. After a bad night, when he does not like the look of his breakfast in the morning, a man has been known to fling the whole table

furniture on the floor. He is for the moment a Bolshevik. The action will not give him a better breakfast, nor any breakfast at all, but it is his mood to smash something.

Showmen, who are keen students of human nature, recognise the existence of this instinct, and a profitable booth at any country fair is the one at which you pay a fee to have a smash at a cupboard of cheap china ware.

Trifling examples these, but useful to illustrate the fact that there *is* the instinct to bash and break in our human nature. And when conditions of life are really bad: when the men who have to face those conditions lose their courage and their wits: and when leaders, playing the Devil's game, inject into their hearts the virus of hate and destruction, then there is an outbreak of wide-spread, organised, chronic Bolshevism or Nihilism, or Stundism—to give the disease the names under which it has appeared at various times in Russia. Not that it has been peculiar to Russia, nor to the Christian era. It has broken out in all ages and among all peoples. An echo of it even intrudes into the usually gentle melancholy of the Persian poet:

“Ah, love, could thou and I with Fate conspire  
To change this sorry scheme of things entire,  
Would we not shatter it to bits, and then  
Re-mould it nearer to the heart’s desire?”

Bolshevism, which inspired the Revolution of Russia, is thus only a new name for a very old disease, as old as civilised Time, endemic in human nature as is plague in the Ganges valley, often breaking out in epidemic forms to ravage wide areas. Its idea of giving man satisfaction by smashing this “sorry scheme of things” is madness, yes; but not an unusual human madness.

• • • • •

Fascism, which has made the Revolution of Italy, has not nearly so obvious a source in ordinary human nature. Indeed, it is not to be comprehended without some reference to the spiritual as distinct from the material side of that nature. (This is said with due memory of, and dislike of, the cruelties and unpleasant pranks of some of the disciples of Fascism: no faith has ever made perfect saints of all its followers.) The creed of Fascism is that the generous emotion of patriotism can be made the basis of a practical

working programme, to be applied by all to every public action. It seeks to establish a theory of moral sentiment as the mainspring of human action: to set up the duty of the task, and not the pay of the task, as of the first importance: to make political man turn away from the thought that he must strive to satisfy his needs with the least exertion, and follow the thought that he must strive to give his best to a spiritual, a mystical, entity, his country, without thought of selfish reward. As in the affairs of the other world, so in this. He must seek first the Kingdom of Italy and all other things will be added unto him. To illustrate further from the analogy of religious practice, the citizen must not be only a Sunday Christian but a week-day Christian, must be prepared to put his country before himself, not only when doing a soldier's duty under the stress of a high emotion, but day by day, year by year, in his office, his shop, his work-room. Individual liberty of speech and action, calculation of profits and wages—all these must come second in his thoughts after his country.

Now this, as a political system for all, not as the aspiration of an occasional philosopher (whom

perhaps comfortable circumstances help to be a philosopher) is really revolutionary. It cuts clean across the ideas of all modern practical politics. It would make futile as election issues promises of lower taxation, higher doles, extension of the franchise, appeals to class prejudice. It would seem to presume a national constituency made up entirely of Socrateses—and of Socrateses following a self-denying ordinance not to ask awkward questions.

It has been working now for five years in Italy under the leadership of a peasant's son who was stone-mason, private soldier, journalist, before he became Dictator. What results have been achieved? What is the true nature of that man? What is likely to be the future of Fascist Italy? These are the questions on which I shall give some facts and venture some opinions, the former correct so far as I can safeguard, the latter honest so far as prejudices permit. The prejudices it would be absurd to disavow, but they are a "mixed bag". In so far as they are those of a journalist, they are susceptible to, but sceptical of, enthusiasms. ("I never try to save a reporter," General Booth of the Salvation

Army once said). In so far as they are of a temporary soldier, they are grateful for order achieved and definite results gained. In so far as they are of a student of history and of economics, they are respectful to facts and inclined to statistical tests.

At the outset there will be necessary a short backward glance. Fascist Italy is derived from the Roman Republic, which made Italy once master of the world; from the Renaissance, which, after centuries of decadence, made Italy again a literary and artistic expression; from the *Risorgimento*, which made Italy again a political expression. Its ambition now to make Italy a national expression must be looked at with some reference to the past.

THE AUTHOR.

London, May, 1927.

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## ITALY TO-DAY



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## CHAPTER I

### THE ROMANS

*Was Rome founded by men of Nordic race?—The Story of Æneas—The Growth of the Roman Republic—The practical character of the Romans—Religion chiefly an adjunct to civic Government—Ancient Rome's theological tolerance—The Roman's duty to the State.*

**I**TALY to-day is in protest against the “Nordic” theory of the origin of the Grecian and Roman civilisations, resents generally the presumption that the Nordic races are of a superior racial type, resents particularly the United States immigration quota regulations which treat people of the Latin races as less desirable than people of the northern races.

This Nordic theory presumes an invasion in pre-historic times of the Grecian and the Italian peninsulas by Germanic or Scandinavian races, which put fresh vigour into the existing peoples of Mediterranean origin and civilisation: accepts the Mediterranean littoral as the cradle of human culture, but ascribes the grandeur of Greece and of Rome to the visits of cuckoos from the North.

Rome, according to this might have been a pre-historic Viking settlement, coming to the banks of the Tiber through the Pillars of Hercules, or a Germanic settlement which had crossed the Alps to ravage and remained to colonise. The invaders, less cultivated than the people whose lands they seized, but more vigorous, more practical, capable of a higher development of character, learned the Mediterranean civilisation from the people on whom they had quartered themselves, and then began to improve upon what they had learned.

It is a possible hypothesis, but not a necessary one, unless we accept such fallacies as that fair-haired Achæans and Romans must have had Gothic ancestors, as if there were no fair-haired

peoples in Asia Minor: and that special vigour in any race at any time is a sure proof of Nordic origin, and so the Arabs of Mahomet's day must have had Baltic mothers.

The real origin of the special vigour of Rome can only be guessed at. There are many myths and allegories to choose from if a poetical, without necessarily a correct, explanation is desired. It may be of some significance that the Romans themselves agreed that Rome was a colony, but not from the North but the East, founded by *Æneas*, one of the nobles of Troy, escaped from the fate which overtook most of the inhabitants of that city when it was captured by the Greeks, and, after many wanderings coming to Italy, to found on the banks of the Tiber a new Troy. The story has as much hint of the truth as other classical myths. It was welcomed by the Romans when they had time to spare to look up a national "Family Tree". The Greeks, entering the field of literature first, had appropriated for themselves most of the desirable associations with gods and heroes. The story of *Æneas* brought Rome into the circle of the Olympic life.

Perhaps the truth about the origin of Rome can be surmised best from the legend of Romulus and Remus, and from the tale of the carrying off of the Sabine women. Probably there settled down on a hilly fastness by the Tiber side some band of invaders with an exceptional degree of warlike courage. As they mixed with their neighbours they softened but little: their manners settled to a somewhat harder mould than that of the surrounding Latium.

As these Romans grew in numbers and needed more territory they jostled other peoples out of their neighbouring lands by force. The area of conquest quickly grew. Rome became a considerable State, then mistress of a ring of Italian States which became subject to her without being actually incorporated in her citizenship. In time Roman citizenship was extended to take beneath its mantle all the Italian people.

The wars by which Rome compulsorily united Italy were stubborn ones, showing that there was not any great degree of difference between the Romans and their neighbours. Sometimes this work of nation-making by conquest had to

be stopped for a while until an incursion of the Goths was beaten off—the Nordic men appear always as enemies, not as kindred. When all Italy was Roman, Roman colonies spread across the sea, towards Sicily in the first instance.

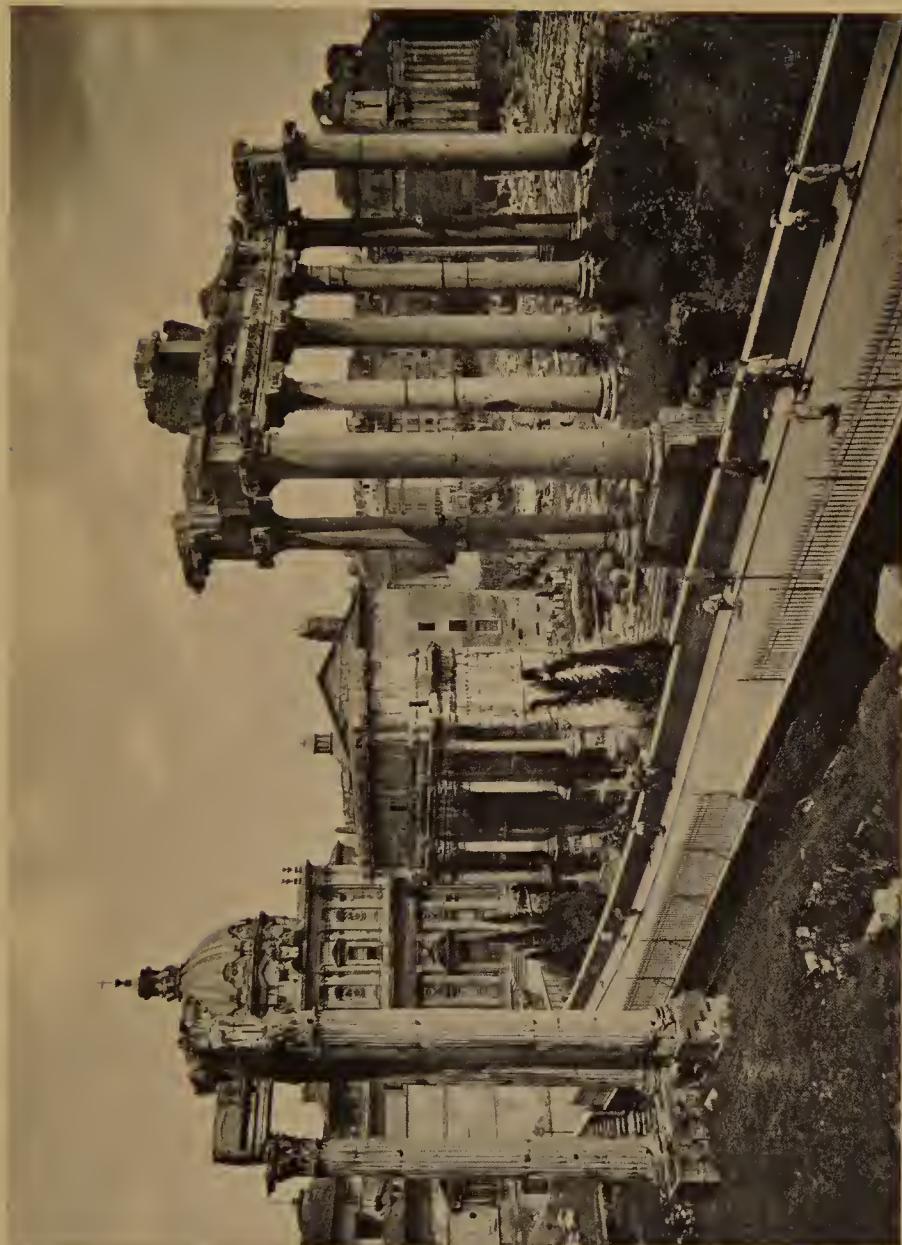
In Sicily, with her flourishing Greek colonies, Rome had her first quarrel with the power of Carthage, a Phœnician settlement occupying the lands which are now Tunis and Tripoli. From this contest with Carthage emerged the Roman Empire. It was characteristic of the Roman of the day that, finding in his fights with Carthage his inferiority at sea impossible of speedy remedy by training, he set himself to change the conditions of sea warfare. The Carthaginians, hereditarily merchants and good sailors, manœuvred skilfully their ships to ram and destroy the ships of the enemy. The Roman, not having time to learn to play the game of naval warfare on those lines, built ships which would bring the conditions of a battle at sea as nearly as possible to the conditions of a battle on land, ships which could grapple with those of the enemy so that the crews

might fight the issue out on the interlocked decks.

The Roman State at this stage of its history is obviously the pattern which Fascist Italy has before its eyes. Patriotism and national pride were “organised” systematically. The *Respubblica*, the “Commonwealth”, was everything; the right of the individual when in conflict with the Commonwealth was nothing. The sentiment of the people was proud and freedom-loving. But for the Commonwealth’s sake they would submit to the most absolute despotism. Religion was the servant of the State, all religious rites having a motive of patriotism. Military courage and simple labour alike were exalted. The Roman word for the highest worthiness was *virtus*—manly strength and courage. Women were held in high respect, and the qualities asked of the “Roman matron” were patriotism, fidelity, and devotion to her family.

The Romans were mightily industrious warriors, but, as Ruskin recognised, not a fighting people for the sake of fighting, but for the spread of their Dominion which was to them a religious motive. That motive carried them to a height of great-

THE FORUM, ROME





ness which it is difficult for the human mind to grasp. Rome, within a few generations, rose from being a robber keep on the banks of the Tiber—one among the thousands in Europe at the time when a road, a waterway, or the nearness of a fertile valley gave to resolute men good hope of plunder—to being a great State; then imposed her will on the surrounding States one by one, and mastered all Italy; then set herself to mastering the world, and with her conquering legions penetrated to Persia, Nubia, and Morocco; to the Lowlands of Scotland, to the banks of the Meuse and to the Carpathian Mountains. The civilisations of Syria, Egypt and Greece were absorbed, and then imposed on the world in a practical Romanised form, which is the basis to-day of all Western civilisation.

The explanation of this greatness of achievement—so far as it can be explained—was a robust, stubborn, practical common-sense, and a system of seizing and adapting to Roman use the best thought, and the best methods of other nations. The Roman was an intensely practical, straightforwardly resolute person, knowing what

he wanted, and seeking to arrive at his end by the shortest road on which he could march with dignity. (He was not willing to scramble or to crawl. He needs must go forward with state, believing in the value of pomp and ceremony to impress, not alone the foreign, but the domestic mind.) His buildings lacked the exquisite elegance of the best Greek architecture. The sculpture with which he decorated them was poor in comparison with the standard of the Parthenon. But there was a greatness of simplicity and of honest straightforward devotion to an ascertained purpose about all that he did. The Roman law, the Roman road and the Roman aqueduct are the characteristic monuments of the Roman character.

This Roman was not spiritually minded. Discussions on the soul did not take up much of his attention. Religion he regarded chiefly as a useful adjunct to the government of the State on a resolute and patriotic system. There were gods, no doubt, and these gods had probably power for good and for evil. It was wise to placate them. But any real concern about their nature was foreign to his practical and material-

istic spirit, which was concerned with this world, not the next. He loved this world, and wished to make it as desirable a place as possible, as comfortable a place as possible, as Roman a place as possible, so went across the globe with iron-shod heels, insisting on making other peoples civilised and comfortable after his standard, and incidentally borrowing from them anything that seemed useful—an idea, a god, a new method of building. It was a most perplexing experience to him when he encountered the Christian faith, and discovered that the Christian theology was not willing to take a place in his Pantheon, and share with Jupiter and Isis the responsibility of keeping the Roman world contented and orderly. That attitude seemed to him entirely unreasonable. He was willing to admit the possible divinity of this new Deity from the Roman province of Judæa, though his opinion of that country was not generally favourable: and to allow Him honour, asking in return only reciprocal service in maintaining the Roman power, which was to his mind the only important Divine work.

The Roman persecutions of the Christian Church had no theological motive, but were inspired by the conviction that that Church was hostile to the State. Proof of this came later when Rome's leaders adopted this new creed of Christianity, which in other hands threatened to become an instrument of social revolution and disorder, because they saw in it a means of re-organising the threatened civilisation of the day. The masses, left dispirited as a result of the wars with the barbarians, were enrolled as obedient and patriotic citizens under a new policy which promised them great rewards in the Hereafter for faithful service to constituted authority in this world. The barbarians themselves were drawn to a system which appealed at once to their superstition, and to their human needs; were drawn to it and through it to civilisation. Christianity in the hands of the African Christians would have become a creed of horror and destruction. In the hands of the Byzantine Christians it would have lost itself in a morass of idle speculations. Roman genius gave it a practical, human, political organisation. The real use of religion, in Christian as well as Pagan times, to the Roman

was as a means of national discipline—that discipline which he thought necessary for every great task.

The Roman citizen's first duty was implicit obedience to the State. Having fulfilled that duty he was left room to cultivate a generous egoism. His language, and its grammar, reflect the sense of self-importance of the Roman individual. "I and Cæsar" would be natural in the mouth of a Roman workman at home. But abroad he would hardly think a name necessary. "I am a Roman citizen" would be his one title to respect.

The civic polity and spirit of ancient Rome—with the possible exception of the outlook on religion as solely a patriotic institution—is clearly the model of Fascist Italy. Will that Italy take to heart not only the lesson of what made Rome great, but of what led to her decline when the capacity of the Italian people to keep pace with the extension of Roman territory ceased? Whilst the Italians were drawn to all quarters of the world to fight under the standards, the Italian blood in the home-land was dangerously thinned. More and more the fields passed to the

cultivation of slaves drawn from foreign countries; passed also to the service of pleasure rather than of use. In time followed exhaustion. Not all the practical genius and wise moderation in policy of the Antonines could save a people which had attempted too much.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ITALIANS

*Preserving the Roman culture—Early Christianity's hostility to Pagan Art and Letters—Tolerance of the Italian Church—The Renaissance—The Risorgimento—Cavour's realist policy—Disillusionment in United Italy—The failure of Parliamentary government.*

**W**HETHER if Cæsar, with his supreme administrative ability, had lived another ten years, and the Roman race saved from the drain of the civil wars which had to be waged before Augustus won despotic power, Rome's decline would have been averted, or whether her exhaustion was primarily due to Cæsar having flung out too far the lines of the Legions, is a problem which will always attract mankind, filially interested in all that concerns the parent of European civilisation. Clearly, even

before Cæsar the Roman power was showing some symptoms of decay at the heart, but it had great reserves of vigour, as the Antonine age proved, and the fact that when mortal sickness set in, the death agony stretched over several centuries.

For the later centuries of its life the Roman Empire was divorced from Italy, governing its constantly dwindling territories from a new capital at Constantinople. Italy during this time, enfeebled and cruelly ravaged, made heroic efforts to keep alight the lamp of Roman civilisation. In those years of darkness and disaster, north of the Alps there was nothing, except perhaps here and there a faint memory of its traditions; all else had been trampled down by the barbarians. But south of the Alps an Italian people, Latin in language and in culture, kept not only its memory but its actual institutions and practices.

Gothic invaders and immigrants came to Italy. The Lombards crossed the Alps to plunder and remained to colonise. The Huns made cruel ravages. Throughout all, the Italian people maintained a Temple for civilisation. As Mr.

Henry Taylor notes in his study of the Medieval Mind :

The Italian stock remained predominant over all the incomers of northern blood. . . . With weakened hands it still held to the education, the culture of its own past: it still read its ancient literature and imitated it in miserable verse. The incoming barbarians had hastened the land's intellectual downfall. But all the plagues of inroad and pestilence and famine, which intermittently devastated Italy from the fifth to the tenth century, left some squalid continuity of education. And those barbarian stocks which stayed in that home of the classics became imbued with whatever culture existed around them, and tended gradually to coalesce with the Italians. . . . In Italy a general survival of law and institution, custom and tradition, endured so far as these various elements of the Italian civilisation had not been lost or dispossessed. . . .

In Italy as in no other country, the currents of antique education, disturbed yet unbroken, carried clear across that long period of invasions, catastrophes, and reconstructions which began with Alaric.

The ancient culture of Italy found itself attacked from two directions as the material power of the Roman Empire crumbled. The barbarians, rushing in from gloomy forest and desolate steppe, had no knowledge of, nor sympathy

with, literature or art. Almost invariably they ravaged and ruined. Sometimes their haste or carelessness left the ruin incomplete. Occasionally, the history of the times records, a happy contempt saved precious things from destruction. They tell of the Goths, after a great victory over the Emperor Valens, that when a collection was made of all the books that could be seized to consign them to a bonfire, one of the barbarian leaders stayed the sacrifice.

“It is by reading these books that the Romans have become weak and timid,” he argued, “and so we have been able to overcome them. Let us leave the books so that they may continue to corrupt our enemies.”

The reasoning was fortunate if unsound. At another crisis of civilisation, when an Islam army broke in upon the cities of Egypt, a conqueror argued differently.

“If these books,” he said, referring to the library of Alexandria, “are in accord with the Koran, they are useless and should be destroyed. If they are against the Koran, they are pernicious and should be destroyed.”

But in addition to the destructive rage of the barbarians, the Italian classic culture had another enemy. Early Christianity declared war on the luxury, the sensuality, the materialism of the Pagan world. Very much of the Art and Letters of the time naturally were bound up with the services of the ancient religion or the corrupt luxury of the people, and therefore came under suspicion. Early Christianity to a great extent ranged itself as the enemy of Pagan culture as well as of Pagan religion. Christian divines, preaching asceticism as the one rule of life, found little or no place in the godly man's scheme of conduct for any intellectual interest. Note in illustration Jerome's dream of exclusion from Heaven because of his too great joy in classic reading, Augustine's struggle to turn his mind away from any secular learning as being inconsistent with real piety.

Fortunately there was not a general rule of intolerance to art and literature. Just as if the Puritan campaign of "idol-smashing" in England had had the general sympathy of all the people, not an English church of the Middle Ages would have survived to these days, so if the Early

Christian Church had been of one mind in its hatred of Pagan culture the work of destruction, begun by the barbarians, would have been tragically completed, and neither building, statue, picture nor manuscript would have survived to tell of the achievements of Greece and Rome, and to be the foundation for modern culture. Whilst, however, some of the preachers of the New Order—more especially those who looked forward to a literal and immediate fulfilment of the prophecies regarding the Second Coming of Christ, which would usher in the end of the world—pursued with vindictiveness every monument and record and custom of Pagan life, there were others who set themselves to guard and to preserve its manuscripts, statues and traditions.

In Italy, Early Christianity was more liberal than in other parts of the world. It did not share those excesses of asceticism which marked the primitive Church of Africa. Nor did it devote very much attention to the hazy speculations which engaged the Greek mind when it turned to Christianity. The Italian Church was inclined to be practical. The degree of tolerance

it was willing to give to Pagan literature and monuments was in some quarters slight, but among those who had adhered to Christianity more from political than from theological motives it was naturally generous. Further, classical Paganism survived in Italy with some strength for a long time after Christianity had become the established religion of the Roman Empire. Far into the Christian era there was a predominantly Pagan Roman Senate.

The comparative tolerance of Early Christianity towards Pagan Art and Letters in Italy, and the survival there of a great number of Pagans, who sought to cherish their waning faith by an ardent cultivation of Pagan culture, made the Renaissance possible in Italy. But the chief foundation of that great efflorescence was the continued existence in Italy—degenerate as she was, saddened by many sorrows, trampled down by many invaders—of a national spirit. Italy at her lowest did not forget the glories of her past. Carved by conquerors, broken up after the conquests of the Langobardi of the Sixth Century into fragmentary states, made the victim of the new Germanic powers arising on the ruins of the

Roman Empire, she did not altogether disintegrate. With instinctive piety she kept alive the memory of learning, and prepared for an intellectual triumph of the world which was to spread the glory of Italy wider than had the Roman Legions.

The fact that the Roman Empire had transferred its capital to Constantinople, a city which was in a better position to hold the Eastern Marches against the barbarians, and which could stand sentinel over Africa and Asia as well as Europe, was helpful to the Renaissance. Italy missed thus some of that infection of Asiatic influences which began to creep over the Eastern Roman Empire. Weeds did not smother the seeds of a new European culture. The subordinate Western Emperor, who reigned at Rome, or later at Milan or Ravenna, was sometimes, of course, a "barbarian". But on the whole the Roman court kept to a European tradition, whilst at Constantinople Roman ideas were profoundly modified by Asiatic thought and custom, so producing the Byzantine type of civilisation.

The visitor to Italy who is interested in the

twilight of the Roman Empire there and the close-following dawn of the Renaissance, should pay pilgrimage to Isola Comacina, the island on the Lake of Como, which was the last of Italy to hold out for the Roman power—a little patch of land, under half-a-mile in length, under a quarter-of-a-mile in breadth, floating on the bosom of Como with a narrow strait between it and the mainland.

Italy has been in all ages a land of heroic little places. Patches of her territory, which would not make a large farm by acreage, have won fame which puts in the shade the achievements of some great kingdoms. But surely this islet of Isola is the greatest instance of a heroic David among peoples. A stout fight it put up against King Flavius of Lombardy, who had conquered all Italy down to Calabria, holding its little half-mile of length for the Roman Empire, which was then grappling with deadly foes on the Thracian plain. Refugees from other parts of Italy, aspiring still to be Romans and Italians, found their way to Isola, and its strong fortifications held out for long against the northern invaders.

The name of the general of that heroic defence, General Francioni, has survived. A final attack by King Flavius, subjecting the tiny stronghold to continuous siege and assault for six months, was in the end successful, and the flag of the Roman Empire vanished from Italy.

. . . . .

When the Renaissance came, it made Italy live again as a name for civilisation, but it gave more to the world than to Italy herself. The great personalities of that period failed to revive the Italian nation, though they created an Italian philosophy, an Italian literature, and an Italian art which became universal. The beacon-fires lit by Italians illumined all Europe, but Italy continued to be a congeries of petty States, mutually jealous, often warring among themselves, seldom reluctant to call in the aid of powerful foreign neighbours to secure some local advantage at the price of the further enslavement of their country.

“Petty” States were those of Renaissance Italy in comparison with what a united country might have been, but many of them great in the

eyes of the contemporary world: Florence, belonging to civilisation as well as to Italy, city of Dante, of Da Vinci, of Botticelli, of Lippo Lippi, of Giotto, of Galileo, of the Medici, of Machiavelli, doomed to an agonising life during centuries of barbarian rule, gradually emerging as a little free city maintained by "Florentine patriotism"—that crafty, courageous, relentless civic pride; Venice, one of the "Powers" of Europe, courted for its friendship by the Eastern Roman Empire, by the Grand Turk, and by the Western kings and emperors, treading a perilous path among them as her skilled sailors threaded the treacherous waterways among the lagoons: Genoa, too, and Pisa, and many others.

But there was no Italy until the *Risorgimento* of the Nineteenth Century, when Cavour, as chief minister of the little State of Piedmont from 1852 to 1858, gave practical proof of a surviving sense of Italian nationality and of Italian capacity for self-government. He was a national architect of real genius, and built up first the economic and moral strength of Piedmont and carefully prepared it as the centre around which all Italy might unite and effect the expulsion of the

Austrians, then in possession of much of the North.

Cavour's methods were largely modelled on the maxims of that rather misunderstood Florentine patriot, Machiavelli, who stated, with acute insight and with straightforward directness, the maxims which in his view must govern the policy of a State. There is nothing unusual in holding and applying to the affairs of State the motives of a passionless, conscienceless expediency which Machiavelli advocated. But it was an essentially Florentine Renaissance achievement to set them down so clearly and frankly. "*The Prince*" is not at all, as some imagine, the cynic exposure of an evil mind, but a calm dispassionate analysis of the "political" ethic. One can give all due regard to the denunciations of *The Prince* (often from people who have not read it) and still fail to find in the world of to-day a political system which adopts any higher code of ethics than it sets down, especially when questions of foreign relations arise. Machiavelli's subtle mind saw clearly the basic motives of political action, and the Renaissance spirit enabled him to state frankly what he saw. Such candour is not

possible now. Statesmen follow the methods which have come to be known as "Machiavellian": but while doing so profess motives of justice and of honour; in which reassuring, but quite untrue, professions they are following, of course, with fidelity the spirit of Master Machiavelli.

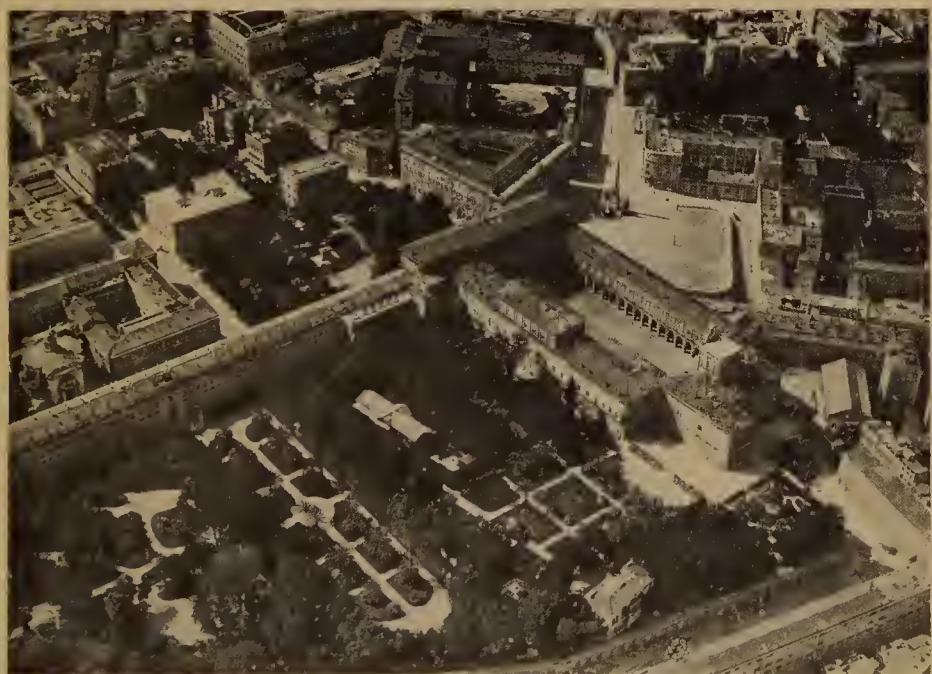
As minister for Piedmont, Cavour's first important achievement was to gain an alliance of Piedmont with Great Britain and France in 1855. Italy, after centuries of eclipse, came on to the European stage again with the despatch of eighteen thousand Piedmontese troops to participate in the Crimean War. The army made an excellent impression upon the British and French allies: "The Piedmontese army was the admiration of all: perfect in every detail", said General Ford George Paget. The military reputation of Italy was thus established, and the first valuable step in international diplomacy gained, *viz.*, proof provided that Piedmont could help and could hurt. The campaign for Intervention in the World War, with which Mussolini's Fascists began, was in the spirit of Cavour's intervention in the Crimean war, founded on the faith that to secure respect a nation must show

warlike prowess. Perhaps, in due course, the League of Nations will free peoples from the necessity of holding that faith. As yet, no. There was quite recently an independent nation called Corea, which had the amplest international guarantees of independence: which consequently allowed her fighting power to decay. Corean independence has vanished. Swiss independence, which is guarded by the power and the willingness to fight, survives without serious challenge.

Cavour having made Piedmont, which he designed to be the foundation of a free Italy, respected, set to work to take full advantage of that respect. France was used to help to get the Austrians out of much of Italy. Then, since France had not helped with the idea of assisting Italy but of damaging Austria, France was dispensed with. There is no doubt that a policy was followed of playing off Great Britain against France. But so far as Cavour could afford to be anything but pro-Italian he was pro-British. There was in Great Britain a real, and in some quarters a quite disinterested, passion for the freedom of Italy. Italians, recognising this, re-



THE MONUMENT TO UNITED ITALY, ROME



THE QUIRINAL, ROME, FROM THE AIR



sponded with a genuine enthusiasm for British ideals. It was a worthy sentiment but had some results—for example, a respect for the British Parliamentary system, leading to its close imitation—which Fascist Italy to-day looks upon as unfortunate.

Cavour having used French help to drive the Austrians from much of Northern Italy, next used the Italian revolutionary movement as his instrument for national unity. This movement had in 1859 and 1860 been fostered by an organisation known as the National Society with a clearly defined nationalist aim. It had a great military leader in Garibaldi, whose patriotism and self-abnegation won for him confidence in all the states of the Italian peninsula. His expedition of The Thousand in 1860, which overthrew the tyrannical government of the Two Sicilies and made the foundation of the kingdom of Italy possible, was great in daring and brilliancy of achievement.

Cavour's use of the forces of Revolution was as "realist" as his use of France and of Great Britain. It was a masterpiece of practical statesmanship which obviously has been studied closely by the

Fascist leader of to-day. The revolutionists were encouraged to work for the overthrow of various despotic governments of Italy: but once their work was done, their activity was checked, and their leaders forced into the party of law and order under constitutional government. Without exception the States of Italy, as they were freed one by one, declared for union with Piedmont. "The people want Italy one and indivisible with Victor Emmanuel constitutional King."

On February 18th, 1861, Victor Emmanuel opened the first Italian Parliament in Turin. It contained deputies from all parts of Italy, though Venice and Rome were still under Austrian and Papal rule. Venice was brought into the Italian kingdom in 1866, after the war by Prussia and Italy against Austria. Rome was occupied after its evacuation by the French troops during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870.

After the victories of *Risorgimento*, disillusionment. The Italy of 1871 was united and free, but not set on a fair road to happiness and prosperity. The national frontiers left a great deal

of what was rightly Italian territory still under a foreign flag, and from a point of view of national defence were impossible strategically. The Franco-Prussian war had set Europe rankling with international animosities which were certain in time to lead to another great war. The Powers—with the exception of Great Britain, which relied on Sea Power for the defence of her frontiers—were forced to embark on military programmes which aimed to train and arm practically the whole of the able-bodied male population. Italy had to follow suit: it was the price of admission to the circle of the Powers. At the same time the necessities of national defence against Austria's sea forces imposed upon her a considerable naval programme. The new nation, poor as she was, had thus to take up the burden of great military *and* naval programmes.

This was in itself a serious handicap. But far more serious was the political inexperience of the people, and the illusion of their leaders that, in spite of that inexperience, they could benefit from the Parliamentary institutions which Great Britain had evolved from centuries of experience. Almost all of newly united Italy had been for many

generations under small and usually incompetent despotic rulers. The people had had no training in self-government. The majority of them could neither read nor write.

The world owes much to the genius of the British race for tolerance, for good temper and for the practical reconciliation of the principles of authority and freedom. The institutions of liberty of thought, liberty of the Press and free popular government, are fruits of that genius. But justice demands the acknowledgment that there is a heavy *contra* account, due to the perversion of logic which has made so many British minds confuse in this matter cause and effect, and recommend to other peoples as the sovereign remedies for political backwardness, not the methods of cultivation but the results of cultivation. A Parliament elected under a free franchise is put forward by them as a panacea for all public ills, from China to Peru, and to give a man or a woman a vote is regarded as giving a passport to a political paradise. The resulting confusion and in consequence can be best suggested by reversing a cinematographic film so that the end of an event shows as its beginning.

Italian admiration for British institutions undoubtedly had a great influence on the United Italy of 1871, and prompted the setting up of an Italian constitutional monarchy, with representative institutions after the best British model, which began the business of governing in the full confidence that it was on the path to public order and public prosperity. At first, supported by the fervour of national feeling which the *Risorgimento* had evoked, Parliamentary government in Italy at least avoided disaster, though it did not give to the new nation the vigorous leadership that was wanted. Then a drift to the bad began, and year by year accelerated. Parliamentary parties split up into groups. Leaders who had been inspired by national sentiments gave place often to men whose motives were personal ambition or sordid greed. In time it came to be the common system for those people who had selfish designs on the public purse to place in Parliament their hirelings whom they controlled with the decisions of secret caucuses. A few good men struggled gallantly against the rising flood of inefficiency and corruption. For a time the Socialist Party gave promise of better things,

bringing into the political arena at least a definite and an honest purpose. Then this Socialist Party began to be infected with internationalism and, in proportion as it ceased to be Italian in purpose, became useless or mischievous.

Before the World War broke out in 1914, Parliamentary government in Italy was clearly breaking down. Cabinets followed one another in rapid succession: they took place but not power. What laws were passed were usually by Royal decree, not legislative enactment. For some years Parliament did not even discuss the annual budget. Had the World War not come it is impossible to believe that Italy, as it was in 1914, could have long survived. I can recall Italians—good Italians they thought themselves, though guilty of the crime which Regulus and Fabius gloriously spurned of “despairing of the Commonwealth”—saying that the only hope of the country was that it should be taken over by some practical people with organising ability, “like the Germans”. (The Italian of that day with a desire for peace and orderliness was somewhat sceptical in regard to British methods!)

The disillusion which followed the *Risorgimento* in Italy was the seed bed for the Revolution of 1922. The war perhaps hastened, perhaps retarded, the growth of the plant of Fascismo; but was not its creator.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FASCISTS

*Italy and the World War—Her relations with the Triple Alliance—The argument for neutrality—Mussolini intervenes—Italy's naval and military achievement—Discouragement after the war—Lack of national leadership—Origin of the Fascists—Their trial of constitutional methods—The March on Rome.*

THE World War, we were told at the time, was waged “to make the world safe for democracy”. It has been followed by a remarkable dwindling of faith in the moral and practical value of democratic institutions. In some cases this is clearly *propter hoc* as well as *post hoc*. But in Italy democratic institutions were groaning for burial before 1914. What the war was perhaps responsible for in that country

was to help to determine the nature of the alternative. Without the war it might have been something akin to a Marxian "Dictatorship of the Proletariat". The war provided the nucleus of resolute ex-soldiers who made Fascismo.

. . . . .

Italy's position at the outbreak of the war was one of particular difficulty. The "Triple Alliance" of Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy, still in existence in August, 1914, was a sham, and known by its partners to be a sham.

At the time of the "Agadir crisis" when Germany seemed to invite a resort to arms, I was in Italy, and from what I learned concluded that, if war had then broken out, Italy would not be tempted by any North African bargain proposed to her, and would not be on the side of Germany; and Austro-Hungary also would refuse to help. Returning to London, information available there confirmed my conclusions. Germany's withdrawal then from an untenable position at Agadir was due to a certainty that she would be obliged to stand alone against a formidable combination. In 1914 Germany made sure of

Austro-Hungary by seeing that she was deeply committed first; but probably never entertained any hope of Italian help, since Italian help had been previously refused, when it had been possible to offer likely attractive gains at the expense of France.

Indeed Italy as a partner in the Triple Alliance had always made the saving proviso that she was not bound under any circumstances to action hostile to Great Britain. The Italian policy before 1914 was based on friendship with the British Empire, and on hostility to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was in possession of much Italian territory; and, if a frank avowal of her real aims could have been made, it was to take advantage of the next European war—as she had taken advantage of the two previous wars—to force Austria out of Italian territory. This was probably quite clearly understood both in Berlin and in Vienna.

When the 1914 War was resolved upon, the utmost that the German Powers hoped for from Italy was neutrality, and as the price of that neutrality, Italy could have secured the promise of the cession to her of at least some portion of

*Italia Irredenta* in Austrian possession. So far as Great Britain was concerned, at first Italian neutrality rather than Italian participation on her side was favoured. In the very early stages of the conflict British policy was still inspired by a vain hope of avoiding a "fight to a finish" and was not anxious to extend its area. Thus in remaining neutral in the first stage Italy was making no trouble for herself on either side.

When it became apparent, as it soon did, that a "fight to the finish" was unavoidable, the position as regards Italy changed. The German Powers were still willing to promise a big price for neutrality, reckoning that neutrality was sufficient for them as it would immobilise great French forces on the Italian frontier. The Allies, however, wished for active Italian participation on their side, and as a counter-offer to that of the German Powers made proposals (which were subsequently embodied in the Pact of London) guaranteeing Italy, at the conclusion of the war, the possession of her provinces then under Austrian rule and also a special position in Albania if Albania were made an independent state.

Italian opinion, so far as it was represented by the political groups, was divided. There were many advocates of a pro-German policy, including most of the Socialist Party and many of the Catholic Party. They had the one strong argument that whilst pro-Germanism meant only neutrality, the other policy meant war—war for which Italy had little material provision, no organised plan, and which must open under the unfavourable strategic conditions of the enemy holding the great Trentino salient, pushed into the very heart of the Venetian and Lombardy plains.

On the other side there were the arguments that there could be no certainty that the German Powers, in the event of victory, would keep their promises in regard to restoring Italian unredeemed territory; and that the true expression of the Italian national spirit was to be found in the cause of the Allies, not in that of Germany and Austria. In time the division of opinion came to be that the timid were pro-German, the ardent and the courageous pro-Ally. It is significant that Mussolini, then a leading, if not indeed the leading, figure in the Socialist Party, parted with

it for ever on this issue, and threw in his weight for intervention on the side of the Allies. The great majority of the Italian people proved in the end the soundness of their hearts, and of their heads. Their voice declared for war and, the timid neutrality advocates were forced to acquiesce.

But the effects of years of political irresolution and ineptitude could not be swept away in a moment by a generous and courageous resolution. Italy having come to a high-spirited decision followed it up rather feebly. On May 3rd, 1915, the Treaty with Austria was denounced. But war was not declared until three weeks later, though every hour of those three weeks was a serious loss of opportunity.

It is not the task of this book to attempt a history of the Italian campaign in the World War. This much is all that need be said here: that in naval operations the Italian Fleet was admitted by the British Fleet to a full equality of daring and endurance; that in military operations the troops showed high resolution and courage, and the leadership in the field was at least as skilful as the average on other Fronts;

but that the economic difficulties and political difficulties in the path of vigorous prosecution of warlike operations were much greater in Italy than elsewhere. Supplies of guns and ammunition were woefully small, and there was not always a full generosity of effort on the part of Allies, who were in a somewhat better position, to try to make good the deficiencies. Food supplies were also scanty: the Italians fought on a much poorer ration than the French, on what was an actual starvation ration compared with the British.

Political difficulties every combatant had. There is no way of conducting war without them, excepting when the rare accident happens of a Cæsar or a Napoleon being at once a military genius and a supremely capable and completely despotic civil administrator. Now success in politics is usually an achievement of intellect rather than of character, and of that type of intellect which is chiefly gifted with readiness of criticism and facility of expedient. But successful leadership of men in the field of battle depends more on character than on that type of intellect. In the records of every campaign it will be found



FASCIST DEMONSTRATION. LABOUR DAY IN ROME, 1927



that the politician has the feeling that the soldier leader is stupid, and is apt to search for (and sometimes, to his misfortune, to find) really "clever" soldiers who will grasp and try to carry out his brilliant ideas. Italy was particularly unfortunate in her political conduct of the World War. (As has been noted, she had a particularly depressing set of politicians). The degree of their interference with operations was fantastic. I have been informed, on authority which I fully credit, that it was one of the bright ideas of the Italian politicians that there was a danger of Army commanders coming under suspicion of favouring units or individuals if they disposed of their forces in proper *echelon*, and that this was the explanation of the overcrowding of the front line trenches and the starving of the reserve lines.

In spite of everything, the Italian Navy and the Italian Army pulled their full weight in the war team: but Italy clearly sometimes suffered in Allied war councils from "the poor relation" outlook. This was noticeable even in British military circles after the Caporetto disaster in 1917 (we had not yet learned, with the experience of 1918,

that a German break-through did not necessarily mean incompetent defence) but from a point of view of Italian national pride it was of advantage then rather than otherwise. Following upon Caporetto, British and French troops went to the Italian Front to give assistance, but it was not considered advisable to use them in detail to stiffen the crumbling Italian line. The defeated Italian Army was left to the task of reforming and taking up a fresh defence line: and successfully accomplished that task—its greatest achievement in the war, not excepting the more spectacular final victory of Vittorio Veneto.

It would be idle to pretend that there was not some strained feeling between the Allies after Caporetto—I found an unpleasant after-math of it early in 1919 when visiting the Italian Front—nor that it did not add materially to the difficulties of the post-Armistice period. Italy felt her dignity wounded, was conscious that she had done her best and was being blamed unjustly for the misfortune which made her the first to suffer from the defection of Russia after the Revolution.

Post-war Italy was truly in a bad way. Economically the efforts of the war had exhausted her poor resources. The political mistakes of the war had further injured her national morale, which had been before desperate enough. A victor, yet she was on starvation rations: and had the feeling that her Allies were minded to deny her the credit of her exertions and sacrifices.

The Italian is more philosophic about starvation than about indignity. Sybil Fitzgerald once wrote about the slums of Naples (representing the extreme of Italian character):

A great traveller, who had profoundly studied human nature in many parts of the world, said that if he were to find himself alone, starving, and without a penny, he would prefer of all places to find himself in the slums of Naples, so high an opinion had he formed of this apparently degraded but kindly people. One starving man will share his wretched meal of bread and an onion with another, and both will laugh and joke the while as if it were a meal fit for a king. . . . A woman will sell her bed to buy a worthy dress in which to appear at her daughter's wedding, or for a first communion; and to bury their dead with pomp the people will resort to the last and most touching sacrifices. Their sense of honour is keen.

The feeling of baffled resentment and discouragement in Italy was not allayed by the attempt, doubtless made with the best intentions, of Mr. President Wilson to appeal directly to the people from the views of their representatives at the Peace Conference. The elements in the nation which had been opposed to intervention in the war now lifted their voices to declare that the country had lost over 600,000 dead to gain what could have been gained by peaceful agreement. The international Communist sect, in power at Moscow, directed its forces to bring Italy into the maelstrom of the world revolution.

To meet these post-war dangers there was no national leadership. The men of Parliament had been busy enough criticising war leadership. Now that the task of leadership was their's they showed no constructive capacity. They failed to use the one good instrument near to their hands, the spirit of comradeship of the combatant army. They preferred to bargain with revolutionaries and to make terms with rapine and murder.

It was at this stage, when Italy seemed at the verge of dissolution, that Fascism intervened under the leadership of Mussolini.

Fascism to-day flaunts as its symbol the old Roman lictors' Fasces, a bundle of staves with an axe projecting. That symbol is given by many observers a far too narrow meaning, the meaning of stern punishment. There is much more in it than that. The lictors' Fasces were made up of rods which could be used to scourge, yes, but also to measure and to direct, symbols as much of the justice of the merchant, of the priest asking for ceremonial silence, as of punishment: the axe as much to clear paths and to make bridges as to inflict death. It is a palpable absurdity to imagine the citizens of the Roman Republic accepting as the symbol of high office the instruments of the torturer and the executioner.

The true meaning of the Fasces symbol is unity, its first origin the fable of the man who showed to his son that a single stick could be easily broken, but that a bundle of sticks (*fasces*) united by a band (*fascia*) could not be broken. I apologise for setting down these matters of common fact, but feel it is necessary because of the frequent interpretation of Fascism as something to be identified with flogging and decapitation.

There were "Fasci" in Italy before Mussolini,

in plain English companies or societies formed with the bond of a common purpose. The Fascists before 1914 were societies formed for some political purpose, Socialist usually. The present Facsism had its origin in Mussolini's "Fasci" formed when he left the Socialist Party to promote the idea of Italy intervening in the war against the German Powers. After the Armistice, in order to combat the revolutionary clubs, Mussolini organised his "Fasci of Combatants". These were societies of men who had fought in the war and who set themselves to meet the violence of the "Reds", when necessary, with counter-violence. The State had practically abdicated its functions. It could not prevent its soldiers and its servants being attacked and murdered; the churches from being closed by force; the factories and railways from being seized, and the population put to the duress of starvation. It was accustomed to enter into negotiations on terms of equality with the revolutionary organisations, seeking to make terms with sedition, and to discuss on what terms estates and workshops seized by violence could be held by their captors.



THE "PICCOLE ITALIANE"  
Italian School-girls



At first the Mussolini Fascists tried constitutional methods in their relations with the State, though assuming the right to intervene directly and on their own initiative against the violence of the revolutionary gangs. In March, 1919, they set forth a national programme, moderate and sensible in every respect. Its "foreign policy" clause is worthy of particular note: "To raise the position of Italy in the peaceful competition of civilised nations". The movement aimed to capture Parliament, and by Parliamentary means to regenerate Italy. It was not until late in 1920 that the Fascisti—at the prompting of some particularly odious murders by the "Reds"—definitely *organised* any armed bands, though, prior to this, they had been so wicked as to defend themselves against violence. In 1921 they appear as a Parliamentary Party "devoted to national aims and to Humanity". At this time the enrolled Fascisti numbered about 150,000 members, the majority of whom were ex-service men, the balance young professional men, farmers, mechanics, labourers.

Not until July, 1922, is there a hint that the Fascisti contemplated a Revolution. Then the

“Reds” had organised a General Strike. The Fascisti gave the Government “forty hours’ notice to act effectively in defence of the State”. The Government had no knowledge of how to act effectively. The next month the Fascisti warnings to it were more peremptory, “to govern or to go”.

As a last resort the Government offered a share in the administration to the Fascisti. Mussolini refused. He had no illusion that the method of cleansing an Augean stable was to go to share in its garbage couch. The “March to Rome” followed with this declaration on its banners: “Our goal is to build up a single and united State of all the strength of the Italian nation as the sole repository of our past history and of our future”.

It was apparently an adventure of the utmost rashness for this little band of voluntary militia, armed with little but resolve, to set out to restore a Kingdom. But it won an instant, a miraculous, success. Mussolini had judged wisely . . . “that Italy, left as without life, waits for him who shall yet heal her wounds and . . . cleanse those sores that for long have festered. It is seen how

she entreats God to send some one who shall deliver her from these wrongs and barbarous insolences. It is seen also that she is ready and willing to follow a banner if only some one will raise it".

## CHAPTER IV

### MUSSOLINI

*His birth and early days—Influence of a saintly mother—Mussolini proud to be a peasant's son—His early spirit of revolt—Editor of “The Class Struggle”—His campaign for intervention against Germany—He goes on Active Service—How his followers regard him to-day—The judgment on him of foreigners in Italy—A personal impression—His quiet urbanity—His definition of the Fascist creed.*

How beggarly appear arguments, before a defiant deed!  
How the floridness of the materials of cities shrivels before  
a man's or woman's look!

All waits, or goes by default, till a strong being appears ;  
A strong being is the proof of the race, and of the ability of  
the universe ;  
When he or she appears, materials are overawed,  
The dispute on the Soul stops,  
The old customs and phrases are confronted, turned back,  
or laid away.

IN a peasant's home of the province of Forli, forty-two years ago, a mother gave to the day an infant, Benito Mussolini—vigorous and impetuous from the hour of his birth, the local legends say. The father, sometime a blacksmith, later the keeper of a small inn, was not above the average of the Italian mechanic of the day in character or in energy but had some mental power; a partisan of the Socialist movement which was beginning to ferment in the country then, according to some accounts more interested in hammering at a political argument than at his forge. The mother, a school-teacher, a woman of firm character and of patient energy, and—if her great son had assumed power of canonisation—to be hailed to-day as Saint.

The boy grew up as other boys in poor Italian homes, under no circumstances of enervating luxury as regards the body, but with better chances than most of feeding his mind. The father taught him politics, the grudges and the genuine grievances of the lowly: the truths, the half-truths, and the whole lies of the Socialist economic creed, including a scorn of the upper

classes who robbed the poor of their happiness. The mother's teaching came from a deeper, wiser mind and was founded on the philosophy of life which Christianity in Italy once successfully evoked to rescue dissolving human society: that the Kingdom of Heaven is not of this world, that Man should be content to be patient and dutiful here in the hope of great reward Hereafter.

From the first, then, the mind of this "Man of Miracle", as his followers to-day delight to proclaim him, was nurtured in an atmosphere of conflict. To be rebel or to be dutiful, to assert rights or to accept responsibilities, which was the higher duty of man? How that antinomy was finally resolved in the man's mind shows to-day in his Fascist policy, which is at once Revolt incarnate and Social Order incarnate, which seeks to reconcile what would seem to be two opposite principles of flamboyant individualism and strict obedience to discipline.

Early educational environment gives in this respect a hint of explanation of the making of Mussolini. Other hints can be gathered from the circumstances of his boyhood life: the discussions at the village inn on the Utopia Socialism

promises to mankind, discussions in which—if the memories of early neighbours are not at fault—the eager, forward boy joined, sometimes with objections that there was wanted more from the new life than a larger plate of macaroni and a fuller wine cup: the village conflicts in which he, as leader of the worker lads, engaged with the young aristocrats (the leader of the latter, by the way, is one of his faithful disciples and helpers to-day); the voracious reading of everything that came under his eyes, whether it was a book on religious mysticism or of economic theorising.

But the sum of all these hints gives nothing like a complete explanation of a character which stands out singular in this century. A million other boys might have had at the same time discontented, half-educated, somewhat feckless fathers, practical, wise, good mothers; have engaged in village class quarrels; have read greedily; without coming to anything more than a restless, futile life. There was clearly greatness of character born in Mussolini.

In these days when his power has been made manifest, certain of his Italian followers have

sought to provide him with a great ancestry, to derive him from some hero of past history. More than most peoples the Italians have the historical imagination. They would be happy to trace Mussolini back to Cæsar. In the same spirit the Romans in their first days of greatness professed to think of the founder of their city not as a tribal leader of genius but as *Æneas* of the Royal and divine-sprung House of Troy. But Mussolini, who has a sense of humour—a somewhat incompatible gift to exist with his other qualities—will have none of this. He will have no noble ancestry contrived for him, and, I hazard to guess, will hold firm to that, for truly he has “caught his fish”, and has no need to make now a hypocritical pretence which may be abandoned later.

Has Browning, by the way, made sufficiently familiar to English readers that phrase of Italian fable “caught his fish?” There was a priest, son of a fisherman, whose fame grew because of his humility. That reputation made him a Bishop. Instead of a coat of arms he put over his chair his father’s net. They made him a Cardinal. Still the fisherman’s net was his

escutcheon. They made him Pope. Then the fisherman's net disappeared to make way for the proud tiara. He had caught his fish.

Mussolini has "caught his fish" in the sense that he has reached to a position of dignity and responsibility among his own people, and of importance before the outside world, than which a man cannot hope for higher. He has no reason, therefore, for a mock humility, and may be credited with sincerity in putting away any suggestion of finding for him a noble "Family Tree". He takes his stand finally as the peasant's son; and is right, for it would add nothing to his stature to find him a grandee as grandfather, nor would it help to explain him. Whatever its source, whether some incident of atavism, bringing back the supremely able characteristics of a remote forefather, or Nature's spontaneous generation, there is no question that a truly significant character came to life in Benito Mussolini, which after some little shaping from environment, grew into the commanding figure of to-day. Carlyle would have delighted, I imagine, to have added him to his gallery of Heroes, with a picture of "The Hero as Politician"; could have pictured

adequately (which I cannot hope to do) the irascible, impetuous, defiant man who is yet capable of quiet patience and cool calculation.

The patience and coolness were the fruits of maturity. There was little sign of them in the boy. He was one of "the lads of the village", as the English phrase goes, prominent in every row. The priest and school-teacher alike suffered from his fiery spirit. That he would come to a "bad end" was predicted, and as his life rushed on turbulently during early manhood, that seemed the likely end. But these good qualities showed out from the first in all the passion and wildness—a genius for faithful affection, an impatience, inchoate but real, with the merely materialistic conception of life, a robust patriotism. He believed in his mother and in Italy even when he was in revolt against all else. He had, too, the peasant's virtue. The fiery magnetism inherent in him was not used to win conquests over the village maidens. He married early—and rashly, at a time when his earnings restricted him to one meal a day.

Intended to be a schoolmaster, he, fortunately, failed in that career; was an exile for some time

in Switzerland where he worked as a stone-mason, and came into contact with the groups of international anarchists and communists there; returned to his native country to become journalist and agitator. As editor of *The Class Struggle* in 1910, Mussolini appears first as a public character. That paper was in revolt against all the established order of things. Its editor came under the ban of authority in 1911 for advocating a strike in protest against the Tripoli war.

Those too-earnest friends of "the Man of Miracle" who would find for him now a ducal ancestry are at pains, also, to discover in every action, article and speech of this early Mussolini the germs of patriotic statesmanship. They strain credulity too much. A better reading of his life is that there were in him fires of impatience and disorder which had to burn themselves out before the true core of the man showed. It is not necessary to manufacture for any great leader of men an unblemished youth. Indeed it would be difficult to say whether it is the rule or the exception for those who are destined to do remarkable work in the world to be young men of propriety and prudence. There may be

something serious in the Abbe Coignard's ironic conception of Heaven's chief favour going to the life not of an unblemished virtue but of a holiness inspired by penitence for past misdeeds.

I should not say that the Editor of *The Class Struggle* in 1910 had already a true conception of the policy of the leader of the Fascisti of 1927. As I see him, the qualities of courage and of a passion to put things right have been always in Mussolini, but those qualities were woefully misdirected in his early days: only with experience and disillusionment did he turn to other ideals.

The editor of *The Class Struggle* developed, but still remained for a long time a Socialist of a different, a more sober, type. The international revolutionary movement no longer appealed to him. The service of Italy as a nation was more definitely in his mind than the service of any section or class. The disorder and feebleness of other political groups in Italy provided, perhaps, the chief reason for his continued loyalty to the Socialist Party, which at any rate had some coherent policy, and was more free than most of the political groups from personal

corruption. It was not until the outbreak of the World War that he definitely departed from the Socialist camp on a patriotic issue.

The Socialist Party in Italy was at that time inclined to favour the German cause, partly because of a sympathy with the bureaucratic State Socialism of the German polity, which provided, they thought, bread and meat for the workers, partly because to favour the German cause only entailed the preservation of Italian neutrality. These arguments, by their practical outlook and their timidity alike, aroused the fierce resentment of Mussolini. The Socialist in him disappeared; there was left the aggressive patriot, to whom the greatness of Italy was everything; the mystic to whom bread and meat were nothing in the balance against an ideal; the man of action, hungry to give blows.

Mussolini was not then a Deputy—the political system of Italy at the time favoured the system of the “bosses” of the parties keeping out of Parliament and controlling the Deputies—but he was one of the chief figures in the Socialist caucus. He urged that the Socialist Party should

declare for Italy's intervention in the war against the German Powers, in the cause of European freedom, and for the recovery of Italy's unredeemed territory. The caucus would not follow him. He left the party and argued for intervention. But argued is not the word. Mussolini was no pleader nor arguer. As Mme. de Stael said of Napoleon's articles—Napoleon, too, was something of a journalist—"You could see that he wanted to place blows instead of words". All the passion and the force of the man flamed out from the printed column to command Italians to follow their sacred destiny and to trample under foot councils of timidity.

People who knew intimately the Italy of those days tell me that Mussolini's declaration for war had much to do with the decision of his country. He had risen in a moment from being the "boss" of a Party to being a leader of the nation.

Italy made her decision. Now came the acid test of Mussolini's character. Was he demagogue or truly idealist? Would he be content to encourage his countrymen from the rear—in his nostrils the incense of flattery coming to him

now from a thousand braziers? Or would he choose to meet himself the fumes of cordite and of poison gas?

A London newspaper office tells of one of its leader-writers who, a night of the first month of the war, wrote, as in duty bound, his article calling for all true men to help their country: then threw down his pen, saying "I can do no more of this," and, strong in soul if not in body, went to a recruiting office to ask a soldier's uniform. He was killed in action, but his name lives.

So Mussolini. He left his editor's chair, and as Private, and later promoted Sergeant, in the 11th Bersaglieri, did his duty in the trenches until seriously wounded in 1917. Then, not fit for further active service when discharged from hospital, he went back to his paper, and was now set on the true path of his destiny, a national leader who had had his baptism of blood, and justified his creed that by action not words man makes good.

Mussolini to-day, what manner of man is he? I have sought knowledge from his followers, from

his intimates, from the Italian "man in the street", from people of other than Italian blood who come into some contact with him, and from personal observation.

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To his followers he is "the Man of Miracle", the hero with whom destiny has blessed Italy to serve her greatness. They see in him courage, power, wisdom in superhuman degree. They give him reverence, unquestioning obedience, unlimited loyalty. What he does or says must be right. He was right as rebel leader of the march to Rome. He was right as the ruthless and violent iconoclast, sweeping away all the old idols of political life. He is right as the preacher of an austere and restrained discipline. He was right when he entrusted the administration of the state to the faithful soldier few who had marched with him to Rome. He is right in supplanting these now with cooler, more instructed instruments of national administration. He was right as Radical revolutionary: he is right as cautious Conservative. No man living has won a stronger personal loyalty.

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To his intimates—they are few in number—he still remains “the Man of Miracle”, in spite of evidence that he shows to them of the ordinary human side; abstemious but liking to be convivial on occasions; delighting in a familiar jocularity; not averse to laughing at himself. “My illness,” he declared once “was providential: it has saved me from getting fat. If I were fat I should be ridiculous, and I cannot afford to be ridiculous.” Apparently he has an inclination, in the artist’s phrase, “*épater les bourgeois*”, and will “splurge” about matters of no importance with lively phantasy. Various “interviews” and statements attributed to him marked by an extravagance of egoism may be authentic enough as reported indiscretions from private conversations. There is not much in his life except work these days. His family live at Milan, and whenever there is an opportunity he retires to his home for a few days; they take little part in his public life.

. . . . .

To the Italian “man in the street”, labourer, mechanic, professional man, industrialist, banker—those who are not declared Fascisti—Mussolini is the man who must be obeyed, the man who

should by right be obeyed, for is he not making Italy great and prosperous? All seem to have confidence in him. Notes of conversations I have had with some two score of people representative of every class of the community, all are marked by much the same argument: that Italy, before Mussolini's march to Rome, was in a very bad way, business bad, employment bad, social order breaking up: now all is going well. There was no suggestion from anyone of a feeling that this had been gained at the expense of a loss of personal liberty under the Fascist regime. Making all allowance for the fact that a critical spirit is not encouraged in Italy to-day, I cannot avoid the conclusion, founded on this series of casual conversations in which I sought to discover some hints of discontent, that the ordinary citizen has a sense of benefit and no sense of grievance.

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The foreigner, resident in Italy, for many reasons is a good witness to call in to an estimate of Mussolini. Not that I should venture to suggest that the Italian people have any obligation to give any weight to foreign opinion in regard to

what is purely their own affair: but such opinion has some special value of impartiality. Of fourteen foreign residents of Italy, British, American and French, whose close acquaintance with the country and whose work there gave them weight as witnesses, twelve were emphatic in praise of Mussolini, two were in a degree hostile. Of these two the chief objection of one was that under the Mussolini regime the Italian people had lost some of their old modest charm as they were now suffering from "swollen head", of the other that Mussolini was still at heart a revolutionary Socialist and, when he was fairly seated in the saddle, would take some opportunity to expropriate the private capitalist.

The first criticism may well have an element of truth, though it makes no case against Mussolini personally, and in my view no real case against the Italian people. It is good for a people to be proud of their country, not good for them to be humble about it or unconscious of its claims to greatness. If pride showed itself in insolence to foreigners it would be a fault, but of that I could discover no signs. In Italy in 1919 I did find a rude anti-foreign feeling in some

quarters, but no trace of it in 1924 or 1927, the years of my last visits, but rather I found that a new national self-respect had engendered a new courtesy, less fulsome in expression but more sincere in service than that of pre-war Italy.

The second criticism is rather in the nature of a prophecy, and only time can show whether it has any real basis. The present evidence is all against it. Foreign capital is simply pouring into Italy to-day, and the security is chiefly confidence in Mussolini that he is leading his people on the path of economic regeneration, and that his policy is one of respect for the rights of private property.

As to my other twelve foreign witnesses, chiefly British, but with America and France also represented, their sentiments were such as would be cheered by any gathering of Black Shirts. They were unreserved in praise of Mussolini, his social, industrial, financial *and* foreign policy. One gentleman (whose name I cannot fairly quote; but it would command the fullest respect if I could) speaking from a long and close knowledge of Italy, was emphatic that Mussolini had regenerated the country, and in carrying out his

task had broken marvellously little crockery. There had been, of course, “regrettable incidents”, but so few of them, considering the cleansing work that had to be done, as to prove the leader of the Fascisti a man, not only of supreme adroitness and capacity, but of conspicuous humanity and reasonableness. About foreign policy this authority was confident that Mussolini was essentially a man of peace; that all hectoring speeches and gestures which would seem to argue to the contrary were “calculated indiscretions”; that he knew his people and knew the other people he had to deal with, and was following a considered policy which would, without blood or tears, bring Italy out of the atmosphere of being regarded as the “poor relation” of the Powers.

. . . . .

To put forward now my personal impression, formed chiefly at a meeting when Mussolini received me for a private conversation at the Palace of Chigi—a meeting which showed the leader in a somewhat different light to that of the public platform. In public the appearances of *Il Duce*—becoming rare of late, owing to the

frequent attempts on his life—are arranged with some eye to dramatic effect; and his speeches also. It could hardly be otherwise. The greatest of men have never despised the aid of a little “stage-management” to impress the people. Hardly a man of those I know in British political life allow their staff to neglect the incidental dressing of the stage and the music; some, indeed are not averse to a *claque*. The public man is committed to a wooing of his public, which must have in it an element of art or artfulness. Whether it is his method “to give them the rough stuff”, or to be a gentle suitor, or a plain Jack Blunt, blurt-ing out carefully-considered impromptus of candour, there is usually a “producer” somewhere behind the scenes. In his home, or his office, he can afford to be, and sometimes is, his natural self.

Mussolini directs Italy from the Palace of Chigi, now the seat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was formerly housed on the Quirinal Hill, but has come with this change, closer to the heart of Rome, to the old Forum and to the new Italian Forum, the monument of modern united Italy, and is within the shadow of the Column

of Marcus Aurelius, commemorating the happiest era of the Roman Empire.

The Palace of Chigi, dating from the Renaissance, simple almost to severity as regards its exterior, has some great apartments, splendid with the glowing decoration of the period. One of these is the office of the Prime Minister. Whether it represents his personal predilection only, or has also an element of the consciously dramatic, no man could have a more impressive setting.

A secretary opened a door and disappeared. I was on the threshold of a vast four-square room, in which a centurion could range his men to join their Legion, its walls, ceiling, floor glowing with the rich, sedate decoration of painter and weaver. The chamber seemed at first quite empty, until, in a far corner—a day's journey away surely!—there came to sight a desk of rose wood and behind it two luminous eyes.

To walk up towards those eyes was in prospect a little intimidating. I reinforced courage with the thought that the necessity imposed of that march was an artifice of stage management,

murmured to myself, “Dare to be a Daniel”, and started.

Mussolini swept away this idea of artifice by rising and coming to the middle of the room to meet me, a hand stretched straight forward from the shoulder in the attitude of a swordsman in the fencing school, approaching his *épée* for the first greeting of a friendly combat. After all I should not have to march up to those eyes. For a moment I forgot them to note his characteristic method of offering the hand, not in the manner of the old Roman salute of uplifted arm which the Fascists have revived, nor in the English manner of the hand half-extended from the elbow. It seemed at once cordial and wary, to say “I am minded to meet you as a friend but if, when you come near, you do not seem to be a friend, I have you at arm’s length and I am on guard.”

There was no second thought of suspicion in this case. On close approach I was not judged hostile; with a strong friendly hand-grip I was conducted to a chair—the single chair in front of the desk—and faced the Dictator across its barrier. The surface of the desk was without a

file or a scrap of paper. It had not the appearance of the table of a functionary, of a man who deals with details; rather a bare anvil on which a Will shapes decisions.

It was strangely impressive, the more so that it was unexpected, to find no paraphernalia of maps, graphs, bureaux, desks for secretaries and the like—this magnificently decorated solitude containing one man, whose burning eyes overmastered all the gold and purple of picture and tapestry.

Mussolini is medium in stature, and in figure neither tall nor short, neither thin nor stout. He inevitably suggests the pictures of the Napoleon of the Empire period in face, all the features firmly moulded, the forehead commanding, nose and chin resolute, the mouth, though full, strong in repose, rather appealing when he smiles. A firm, but on the whole, a gentle character it suggests until you meet the eyes. They are strange, terrifying almost; in colour a deep luminous brown, curiously large and round in the pupils.

Have you ever noted the sun going down in a rufous haze on a summer sea, appearing as a

turbulent crater of veiled flame, and seeming to declare "You may with safety look at me now at rest, but I have fires to strike to blindness?" That is the eye of Mussolini. It contradicts the impression of urbane, controlled strength which his face otherwise gives: has warning of a latent fierceness, of lightnings in leash. Mahomet, one can imagine, had such eyes; and Pasht.

No, Mussolini may become fat if he must, and will not appear ridiculous. But if Fate condemns him to spectacles, he may pass as one of the numerous army of the world's professional men—notable barrister or famous doctor.

Mussolini, speaking good English a little haltingly, said the usual polite things with a quiet urbanity. He was glad to meet a writer of whom he professed to have heard. It was a pleasure to be able to do anything to help the English-speaking peoples better to understand Italy. "And what do you wish to ask me?"

A first request for a definition of the Fascist creed elicited this, "That Fascism holds that dutiful service to his state is the higher obligation

of the citizen than the pursuit of his own ambitions ; that the affairs of the state must be governed, not by those who will seek to flatter the selfish hopes of the individual, but by those who have the highest faith in the state and who will lead it to its highest expression of strength.”

When questions followed on this or that point of detail he said, “It will help if I give you these : they explain.”

Then it appeared that that great bare desk had, after all, somewhere a drawer, and Mussolini took out and gave to me a series of statements on various aspects of the Fascist policy (which I shall draw upon for their facts in future chapters as having authentic authority). I ran through them rapidly, asking a question here and there, and noted sometimes a slight hint of courteous impatience. The English of them, he understood, might not be quite perfect in places. But they would be plain, he thought, to me. Clearly he did not wish to discuss them. They were final as representing his views.

Conversation turned to the Labour Day celebrations of the day before, and the Charter of Labour then proclaimed as the basis of the industrial

policy of Fascist Italy. I had been warned that Mussolini would probably want to question me about the new British Trade Union Law; but he did not, fortunately enough, for it would have spent time. About the Fascist industrial policy he was quite confident, and seemed pleased at its enthusiastic reception in Rome.

Regarding foreign opinion of Fascism he was interested, but obviously not very keenly. A slightly ironic smile seemed to say that he was content with the opinion of Italy: that of the rest of the world was of secondary importance.

With, "Now we must say good-bye. I am happy to have seen you", he closed the talk.

I confess to having keenly searched in Mussolini's face and gestures for any indication of "nerves", of a lack of balance. There was none: never a twitch of a muscle or an involuntary gesture. Assassins permitting, Mussolini should have twenty years of vigorous work ahead of him. Apart from those strange luminous eyes, a normal man: cool, collected, apparently in robust health, one whom it would be difficult

to imagine in a passion, who clearly has a perfectly controlled nervous system. His air of quiet urbanity contradicted the idea I had preconceived —which demanded at least something of the dictatorial, the aggressive, the flamboyant.

Other inquirers who have had personal meetings with Mussolini have been impressed by the wide extent of his knowledge: to engineers, to architects, to doctors, to lawyers, he appears to share their special knowledge. To a journalist there is an easy explanation of that, for Mussolini by profession is a journalist, and that calling trains a man to be able to show a lack of ignorance on all subjects, and to have at least a surface knowledge of everything of general human interest. Indeed all Dictators should be trained as journalists; though all journalists would not necessarily make good Dictators.

Mussolini does give a real and a knowledgeable attention to all the departments of his government, whether the matter is of wheat, of fisheries, of water-power or of mosquitoes: and he has the Sergeant-Major's habit (which was also Napoleon's characteristic) of personally seeing that orders

are not only issued but obeyed. His chief private interests—apart from the task of holding the affairs of forty millions of people in the grasp of his hand—are music (he worships Beethoven) and horsemanship.

## CHAPTER V

### FASCISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

*The antithesis of Democracy—Man owes obedience to the State—Contempt for the ballot box—Parliament only a name—The Fascist Clubs—The Fascist Militia organisation—the “Ballila”—Popular local government abolished—The powers of the Prefect and the Podesta.*

**T**HE Italian Fascist system of government contains almost as many apparent self-contradictions as the British Constitution.

It is described by its opponents as a “tyranny” and is, in some respects a tyranny in the old Greek sense of the word, which did not necessarily connote harsh rule but did entrust final authority to one man. Fascists do not find that word altogether unacceptable, though they are inclined to reject the words “despotism” or “dictatorship”.

Fascism is certainly the antithesis of “democracy”, in the commonly accepted meaning of that term—a meaning which is, I think, corrupted from its original Greek signification. The Greeks had two words to describe systems of government, “archy”, rule, to be applied to subjects who were absolutely governed (it has come down in such English words as monarchy, the rule of one man and oligarchy, the rule of a few men), and “krateia” which, if I understand correctly, had a different significance, not meaning “rule” in the absolute sense so much as the “control” or “direction” of free citizens. The Athenian Government was a democracy, the Spartan Government an oligarchy, and to my mind there was a distinction not only in the extent to which the responsibility of rule was shared, but also in the limitations of that rule. “Democracy” and “demoarchy”—to coin a word for the sake of this argument—would have been, I think, to the ancient Greek political mind quite different terms, and that mind would not apply the word “democracy” to those modern systems of government in which it is accepted, with more or less clearness, that the majority of a com-

munity have the right to interfere with the individual liberty of the minority to an unlimited extent: that the counting of heads decides whether a thing is good or bad.

Seeking a path through the maze of self-contradictions which make Fascism appear at one aspect a movement of Liberation, at another time of Despotism, the central theory of Fascism seems to me this: The State is more than the sum of its individuals of one generation: it has an actual entity of its own, a transcendental existence deriving from the past, from the present *and* the future. To this State, Man owes obedience. His duties to this State and his rights under this State are indissolubly bound, so that, as Socrates in his prison said of pleasure and pain, you might fancy them the two ends of the same thing. There are no rights except those which follow from a true performance of duties, especially no right to a vote giving a share in the control of the State.

This idea of the State is, of course, not peculiar to Fascism. It is implicit in all the patriotic sentiment which has "my country" or "the Fatherland" as a theme. No nation's statecraft

follows absolutely Herbert Spencer's conception of the State as a mutual assurance society with authority no greater than a free meeting of its citizens would agree to give to it. But Fascism seeks to be logical; to sweep away all pretences as to the "sacred rights of the people"; to insist that the idea which the phrase "my country" represents, is the only basis of government. Man is not born with individual rights, but with a duty to his State. He must do that duty, and it is for his State to decide what liberties and privileges he is to enjoy.

That is the idea governing Mussolini and his Fascists. In putting the idea into political practice there comes up at once the difficulty: Who then is to speak for this State if we reject "popular government", *i.e.*, the system which seeks to discover by the counting of numbers the voice of the people and to treat it as the voice of God? If Mount Sinai is not to be a gigantic mound of ballot-boxes, where are the Ten Commandments to be sought?

The answer of Fascism at the moment is—Mussolini. But when this Moses has gone? Then, they say, there will come another, perhaps from

the ranks of those young people who are being trained to-day to believe "that the affairs of the State must be directed not by those who seek to flatter the selfish hopes of the individual, but by those who have the highest faith in the State, and who will lead it to its greatest expression of strength."

Fascism accepts the monarchy—the "constitutional" monarchy, without any real power—as a convenient, if not a logical means of continuity of government. All things are done in the King's name on the advice of his Prime Minister. Were that Prime Minister to pass away, it would be at the King's call that a new leader would take over. It is said that if an assassin's bullet had ended Mussolini's life last year, his "political testament" would have suggested to the King a successor, and that this successor, on the warrant of that nomination, would have been loyally followed by the Fascists.

But, apart from the constitutional monarch, the Prime Minister is actually supreme ruler of Italy. His Cabinet is a Council of State deriving authority from him alone. It is to-day made up of some of the ablest men of the State. Mussolini

for a time sought to govern with the help chiefly of the men who had actually helped him in the Revolution of 1922. Experience taught that ardour in revolt does not presume skill in administration. Reluctantly—with too much delay of reluctance some say—he retired them, and at present he has a faithful council of expert statesmen. This is the Government.

Parliament exists more in name than in fact, though it has the formal function of passing Acts which embody the proposals of the Government or ratifying the decrees which have been already issued by the Government in the King's name. This Parliament has two Houses, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The members of the Senate hold office for life on the nomination of the King, and are in no way dependent upon any popular election. The members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected by popular vote.

The Senate's consideration of Government measures is granted some degree of respect, and often amendments proposed in the Senate are accepted. But the Senate would not be allowed to reject or alter materially a measure against the wishes of the Government. The

Chamber of Deputies is not regarded with so much respect, but it does formally consider measures, and it is not impossible for members to make suggestions, and even to have them accepted.

It is said in many quarters that this Chamber of Deputies will be the last one to be popularly elected; that when it is dissolved its place will be taken by an Assembly, the members of which will represent different departments of the activities of Italy—delegates of guilds of professional and mechanical labour, and the like. I cannot write with certainty; obviously it is not a point on which one could ask for an authoritative statement. Perhaps Mussolini will allow the Chamber of Deputies to survive a long time yet; it has no powers except of assent. Perhaps very soon he will announce the constitution of a new body, which will represent, either by the nomination of the Government or by the election of the various Fascist guilds, the industries of the nation. In either event, the position is the same. There is not in Italy, and will not be under Fascism, any legislative body elected by the mass of the people which will have any real power.

Is there any other body, apart from Parliament, which has control or influence? Let us look at the General Council of Fascismo. It is a body representative of the Fascist clubs. These clubs are constituted of the men of the Revolution, the men who went on the March to Rome in 1922 and the men who have subsequently formally adhered to the Fascist faith, and have applied for membership of the Fascist organisation, and have been accepted after a strict examination into their political faith. Lately, fresh admissions to the Fascist clubs in Italy (though not in the Italian colonies) have been discouraged, or actually vetoed, on the argument that a sufficient time has elapsed since 1922 for genuine Fascists to have declared themselves, and that applicants coming forward now are "luke-warm" and inspired only by the desire to share in the fruits of a victory already won.

The Fascist clubs are in a sense the basis of Mussolini's power. Theoretically, if they choose, they could appoint another leader and he would govern Italy. Practically they are members of the Fascist clubs because they are followers of Mussolini, and it is impossible for people who

are not his followers to secure membership of them.

From within the Fascist clubs was organised, in 1923, the Fascist Militia, which took the place of the revolutionary Voluntary Militia. One may be a member of a Fascist club and not a member of the Militia, but all Militia men are members of Fascist clubs. The Militia is in a sense the striking arm of the clubs. I quote from an authoritative document:

The Fascist Militia as conceived and desired by the Duce is the military organisation of the Black Shirts who in October, 1922, marched on Rome and seized the Government. . . .

A right understanding of the squads, which were the armed forces of the Fascist Revolution, demands a thorough knowledge of the psychology of the Italian people. . . . When recourse is had to violence it is used only as an instrument at the service of ideal and patriotic impulses. The squad movement was placed at the service of the Nation. . . . In the Black Shirts patriotism was a passion and a faith.

Then came the time when Benito Mussolini imparted a new character to these legions of volunteers, who became in name, as they already were in fact, the Voluntary National Militia.

Their revolutionary task fulfilled, the Head of the Fascist Government realised the possible danger to the authority of the State which such a mass of armed men might represent, and he set to work to guide these ardent youths into the paths of legality, transforming the revolutionary forces into a regular militia at the service of the Fascist State.

The Fascist Militia is thus in effect the "Black Shirts" organisation brought under discipline. Experience after 1922 showed the danger of Black Shirt squads acting irresponsibly. Now they must come under control or be squashed. In an instruction to Prefects this year Mussolini made this clear:

There are residua which must be got rid of. I refer to *squadristo* (the armed Fascist bands prior to October, 1922), which are a mere sporadic anachronism in 1927, but which none the less are apt to make a tumultuous reappearance in moments of public excitement. Lawlessness must cease. Not only that form which explodes in petty local violence, though this, too, is damaging to the regime and stirs up useless and dangerous rancours, but those forms also which break out after serious incidents. Now it must be clearly realised that whatever may happen, or may befall me, Prefects must prevent by all means—by all means, I say—any approach to demonstrations against the seats of foreign representatives.

The relations between Nations are too delicate, and liable to give rise to such serious developments, that it is absolutely intolerable they should be left at the mercy of irresponsible demonstrations or *agents provocateurs* on the look out for irreparable mischief. Any Prefect who fails to act in this manner will be regarded as a craven and treacherous servant of the Fascist regime, and as such I shall punish him. Needless to add, Prefects must always tell the truth, and the whole truth, to the Government, especially when such truth is unpalatable.

The Fascist Militia's organisation is territorial. There are sixteen zones, each under a Lieut.-General, and in each zone a number of Legions, sub-divided into cohorts, centuria, manipuli, squads. (The railway Fascisti are organised into separate Legions, fifteen in number.) The Government provides the funds for its upkeep—barracks, arms and equipment. When the Militia is called up for service in its own district, where the men can have their meals in their own homes, they receive no pay. When this is not possible, they receive small allowances. Officers belonging to the General Command and to the Zone and Legion Command are paid. All the other officers give their services for nothing, only receiving an indemnity when on special duty, in the same way as the men.

The salaries of the officers on permanent duty are lower than those of army officers of like rank.

Mussolini is the Commander-in-Chief. The Fascist Militia, apart from its military task of the defence of the régime, has control of the "political police", and from its ranks are drawn the members (but not the President) of the Special Courts recently constituted to try offences against the State.

As regards the future strength of the Fascist clubs and the Fascist Militia, that is provided for by an elaborate organisation of Young Italy. School children are enrolled into what are known as the "Ballila", which are in effect junior Fascist clubs. The name is derived from a young hero of Genoa who, during the *Risorgimento* period, led a revolt against the Austrian troops of occupation. This boy, Ballila, picking up a stone, went forward to the attack with the words "Shall I begin"? The Italian boy to-day enters a "Ballila" troop with that motto. Thus all Italy of the coming generation will be trained in the Fascist faith.

To summarise the national government of Italy: it is Mussolini, acting in the name of the

King, with the advice of a Cabinet of able men, consulting in some degree the Senate, hardly at all the Chamber of Deputies; looking to, as his constituents—if that term of Parliamentary government may be used—the Fascist clubs and the Fascist Militia, which is “the bodyguard of the Revolution”.

Political organisations hostile to the Government, or capable of being hostile, are not allowed to exist, nor can newspapers attack or criticise the Government. Civil servants must be well affected politically towards the Government or are liable to dismissal.

Regarding local government, the same system of control has been set up under laws passed in 1926. Elective municipal bodies have been abolished. Each province is under the care of a Prefect, appointed by the Central Government to act “in conformity with the general policy of the Government, for ensuring *unity of political aim* in the working out of the several services appertaining to the State and local authorities, within their respective provinces, by co-ordinating the work of all public offices and supervising all services”.

Mussolini has stated explicitly his view that the Prefect must govern, and must govern in the spirit and letter of the instructions of the Central Government:

The Prefect—I again solemnly affirm—is the highest authority of the State in the Provinces. He is the direct representative of the central executive power. All citizens—and first and foremost those who have the high privilege and honour of serving in the ranks of Fascism—owe respect and obedience to the highest political representative of the Fascist regime, and must collaborate subordinately with him to facilitate his task. Where necessary Prefects should stimulate and harmonize the activities of the Party in its several manifestations. But on this point let there be no mistake: authority cannot be farmed out, there can be no partnership in authority. Nor is any shifting of power or authority to be tolerated. Authority is one and indivisible.

Prefects should devote their utmost care to the defence of the regime against all those who attempt to undermine or weaken it. All “joint commission” lack of faith in this regard is deleterious. Prefects are expected to take an alert and intelligent initiative in fighting the enemies of the regime. Alert, I say, but also intelligent, for it does not always do to raise harmless and foolish persons to the dignity of martyrdom which they have possibly desired and sought.

Under the Prefect in the Provinces there were of old elected municipal councils with mayors at their head. These have been abolished by laws of 1926. The municipality is now governed by a Podesta who is nominated by the Central Government through the Prefect. The Podesta, appointed for a five years' term which may be renewed indefinitely, has all the powers of a Mayor and his Town Council. He may have, to assist him, an advisory council, partly nominated by the Prefect of the province, partly nominated by local organisations. But his is the sole responsibility to the Central Government, his the sole power in the municipality.

Fascism explains the abolition of the elective municipal councils and the institution of the Podesta as follows :

With methods of administration reorganized, public services simplified and vigilance over Municipal Governments rendered closer and more effective, it was considered necessary to change the form of representation of those Governments in conformity with new tendencies of public opinion which demanded that they be altered in such a fashion as to guarantee continuity and efficacy of action and to insure independence from control of local factions whose quarrels had frequently transformed the Communes

into scenes of conflicts always wasteful and at times dangerous to the interests of the population.

Three years of experiment on the part of the National Government and a mature examination of the question resulted in the conviction that it was necessary to abandon the electoral system and to entrust administration of the Communes to magistrates named by the Crown.

Two factors have played a major rôle in the determination to drop elections; on the one hand, recognition of the miserable condition into which most of the municipalities had been plunged by factional struggles for power; on the other doctrinal conviction that representation of the municipalities should be considered on the basis of ability, and hence that the electoral system should be used only when it guarantees attaining such a result.

Possession of definite ability qualifications is required of Podestas. They must possess a diploma of classical or scientific education or one of technical or magistrat ability; or they must have participated in the war of 1915-1918 with grade of commissioned or petty officer of troops under fire; or they must have filled for at least six months the post of Mayor, Royal Commissioner or Prefect.

The Podesta system answers a true need in the nation's present historical moment, that of centralizing power

in the hands of a single person who is above party passions, who looks after observance of the laws, who, in short, answers fully the requirements of a public officer possessing power great enough to silence discords, to make justice triumph and to spread about him a peace fruitful of well-being and progress.

Thus Municipal Government conforms to National Government in the complete abrogation of the elective system. The ballot box is consigned to the museum in Italy.

## CHAPTER VI

### FASCISM IN RELATION TO POPULAR GOVERNMENTS

*Fascism in relation to Socialism and Individualism*—“*The best citizen is the best man*”—*The elective system derided—Popular government in Great Britain, is it a success?*—*Popular government in the United States, is it Money Government?*

A QUESTION which must interest all political parties in countries where “popular government” exists is that of the reaction of Italian Fascism on their prospects—I write advisedly “Italian Fascism” to exclude those parties or sections in several countries which are named “Fascists”, apparently with the idea that the word can accurately be applied to what is often merely a vigorous protest against Socialist organisations. Italian Fascism is not in essence anti-Socialist no more than it is Socialist.

It believes that the private capitalist is, on the whole, the best organiser of industry and favours, therefore, the nation using him in that capacity and allowing him a fair return for his services. But it is willing to supplant the private capitalist in undertakings where the interests of the community suggest that that is advisable. Its sole test is that of national advantage, and whilst it has substituted private enterprise for State ownership in some cases, it announces its readiness to reverse the process in other cases, if that seems better for Italy.

The challenge of Italian Fascism to existing systems of government is not on the question of private enterprise versus State enterprise—a question which no nation can pretend to make one of principle, since all nations have some State enterprises—but on a much deeper issue. In effect, as has been noted in a previous chapter, it starts with the fundamental conception that in the State duty comes before right, and that the individual has no inherent right to a share in the government of his or her country: and can be allowed a share only as the reward of duty done.

The Fascist Government of Italy expressly disavows any wish to foster an export trade in Fascist opinion. Its policy in this respect is in exact antithesis to that of Russia. That Fascism would be the best method of administration for any civilised country it doubtless believes, but the very aggressiveness of its nationalism diverts it from the idea of foreign propaganda. "Fascism is the best method. Under it Italy will grow great. That is the end of our purpose. We are not vitally interested in other countries growing great." That is the view as I understand it.

But whilst Fascism as a philosophic theory was not likely to have any more general influence than, say, the old Platonic contention that "the best citizen is the best man", as a policy in active working, which has within five years changed the whole face of Italy, it challenges attention. It has become "practical politics" in one country and other countries are bound to consider whether it could become "practical politics" for them.

Some years ago, Lord Grey of Falloden, as high a type of public man as the Parliamentary system has ever produced, said to me:

The fact has to be faced that popular government is the only possible government. To the pessimist who speaks of its dangers I say, "At any rate you must make the best of it, for it is and must be". But personally I am convinced it is the best form of government. You may have under it abuses, mistakes. But on the whole it is preferable to any other form of government. Its abuses and mistakes are least likely to be carried to extremes. It is founded on the sense of justice. It gives a fair basis at the start to public policy.

He meant, of course, "popular government" in the sense of "government of the people, by the people", with elected Parliaments as the supreme authority. The Fascist Government of Italy is certainly not "popular government" in that sense, but its exact opposite. It may be almost said to be in principle opposed to any elective system of deciding who shall have power in the State: has reduced Parliament to a cipher and has abolished elected local government bodies. But it exists: has existed for five years, during which time it has grown in strength: and, except for the successful issue of a conspiracy, may continue to exist indefinitely. A successful conspiracy is hardly likely since Mussolini possesses "one of the most efficacious remedies that a

ruler can have against conspiracies, not to be hated and despised by the people: for he who conspires against a ruler always expects to please the people by his removal; but when the conspirator can only look forward to offending them, he will not have the courage to take such a course, for the difficulties that confront a conspirator are infinite".

Fascism has proved that "popular government" is *not* the only possible government for a proud and intelligent people. Thus, however strictly it may keep from the temptation of any evangelising abroad, its example must have a repercussion in countries which have popular government and have any reason to feel that they are not getting by its means the best return from their national energy.

In Great Britain and the United States of America in particular it must have that effect. They are the two nations which have given the fullest expression to the principle that the voice of the people as declared through the ballot box is the voice of God.

: . . . . .

In Great Britain to-day, is content general with popular government and is abrogation of it

in an odd municipal area such as West Ham or Chester-le-Street merely an abnormal incident suggesting no growth of a doubt?

Without presuming to be able to answer that question with certainty, probably many will agree that there are some reasons to be doubtful whether the system of popular government is serving well the dignity and prosperity of the nation.

There is, for one example, the recent Parliamentary election on a national issue in a South London constituency. Lawless mobs and revolutionary forces in China had committed grave outrages against British subjects and threatened the destruction of Shanghai—a city which is Chinese in the sense only that it is situated in China, but is otherwise a British city, built up by British enterprise with the consent of the Chinese, and is a most important dépôt of British trade. The Socialist Labour Party in the British Parliament showed that the balance of their sympathy weighed rather with the Chinese mob than with the British subjects who had settled in China under the protection of the British flag. One of that party, Dr. Haden Guest, resigned

from the party in consequence, and appealed to his constituents to endorse his belief that it is an elementary duty of a nation, a duty bound up not only with its dignity but with its material interests, to protect its nationals abroad from massacre and rapine.

The appeal was made in the right spirit of popular government, and with a faithful respect for its most honourable traditions. Dr. Guest's case, so far as one can judge, (I took some active part in the election) was not a "Jingo" plea for another "War of Jenkins' Ear". He did not suggest that Great Britain should go back to the spirit of the Eighteenth Century when war was declared on Spain because a Spanish coastguard was reported to have cut off the ear of Robert Jenkins, British mariner, and to have told him "to carry it to his King George". His case rather was that he differed from the Socialist Party, and agreed with the Government, that it was prudent and right to strengthen British defensive forces at Shanghai so that the Chinese mob should have no chance of massacreing British nationals there.

That was his case, I believe; but cannot be sure,

for he was never allowed to put his case. At his every meeting representatives of the "Reds" howled him down. At the ballot he suffered a heavy defeat—carrying a humiliating reflection not on him, for he had acted honestly and courageously, but to the system which permitted this verdict to be come to in this way on such an issue. If the verdict of that constituency *and* the manner in which the trial of the issue was conducted, really represented "popular government" in Great Britain, then it is quite certain that Great Britain under "popular government" cannot long survive as a great Power.

There is, for another current example in England, the record of the Sheffield City Council which, since the last Municipal Elections, has been dominated by the Socialist Labour Party. Sheffield City Council has refused to allow in the public park under its control a Military Tattoo, apparently to show its contempt for the forces which guard the nation's honour and security. It has disbanded the Officer's Training Corps at the secondary school under its control, apparently because it objects to lads training to defend their country.

There are many other examples of a like nature which I could cite if this book were not dealing with Italy but with England—all tending to suggest the same doubt whether the machinery of counting heads to decide issues, machinery which can so easily be abused by any revolutionary gang which is prepared to break a few heads so that others may be intimidated and counted on its side, is the best way to determine the Government of a country.

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That doubt must be in the minds of some people, too, in the United States, though there the counting of heads tends to become, in measure, a counting of dollars. Rather than intrude my own first-hand impressions of the working of popular government in the United States, let me quote this view by Mr. William B. Munro in that highly responsible American review *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1927):

Most of the momentum in government is provided by the action of various organised groups among the people, groups which have definite interests to serve and which are aggressive in promoting them. These interest-groups, as we may call them, work for the most part

within the ranks of the party organizations. Indeed, the chief function of the party organization is to furnish a cover or screen for the political activities of groups which desire to keep their true objectives invisible. When any racial, sectional, or economic element desires to make government serve its own special interest, there is never any open avowal of this design. That would be fatal to the end in view. The special interest must be in some way put forth as identical with the general interest, and must usurp a slogan that suggests democracy, justice, Americanism. Hence when we demand that the laws shall guarantee the worker more than he is worth, we call it social justice. And when the ex-serviceman proceeds to raid the public treasury he calls it adjusted compensation. . . .

From first to last in the history of government the money power, the interest of vested wealth, has been the best organized and, on the whole, the most enlightened determinant of public policy. . . . One might even go so far as to say that without the consistent direction of government by organized wealth throughout the ages we could not have either the form or the spirit of those political institutions which exist in the United States to-day. . . .

The whole course of American political development during the past fifty years has served to accentuate and facilitate the accumulation of political power in the hands of the emissaries of the rich. Franchises, patronage, and

other gifts from the public authorities are worth a good deal more to the recipients than they used to be. The newer agencies of democracy, such as the direct primary, the initiative, referendum, and recall, the extension of the suffrage to women, and the removal of party designations from the ballot in local elections—all of them have served to increase, not to diminish, the cost of operating our electoral machinery. They have caused the diversion to politics of vastly larger sums than were formerly used. And it ought to be reasonably clear that, in so far as we make our politics more expensive to all who engage in them, we proportionately strengthen the power of those who have the money at their command. . . .

The human herd does not seek the thoroughbred and follow him. It trails the bell-wether with the loudest clang.

Mr. Munro thus presents “government by the people” in the United States as government by the people who can make a profit by spending money on attracting the votes of the people. True, he believes that this money power is used on the whole intelligently and for good ends. But the conduct and issue of an election for the Mayor of Chicago conducted during the same month of April, 1927, throws some doubt on that point.

The successful candidate in that election, which was carried out with the help of machine guns and armoured cars, to choose the most fitting person to keep Chicago's municipal affairs in a decent and orderly path, was "Big Bill Thompson" and his most telling argument seems to have been, "Elect me and I'll bust King George in the snout if he doesn't keep it out of Chicago".

One must presume that "Big Bill Thompson" believed, and persuaded the majority of the citizens to believe, that King George V of Great Britain takes an active and malevolent interest in Chicago's municipal affairs. Certainly here the herd followed the "bell-wether with the loudest clang", and the result must be a certain shame and doubt of "popular government" in many American minds.

These illustrations—British and American—of "popular government" have their chief value in that they are all drawn from the first quarter of this present year. I have not had to rake the dustbins of history for them. No one can question that they are fairly representative of what is happening frequently; and more frequently,

not less frequently, as popular government grows riper. They suggest grave doubts whether "popular government" is the best method of conducting the necessary authoritative community interferences with individual liberty. The answer to doubters has been in the past: "Popular Government is the only possible government. You must make the best of it, for it is and must be."

Can that same answer be given in the Year V of Italian Fascism? Or must "popular government" give serious thoughts to putting its house in order since there is an alternative? To the first question the answer is clearly, "No". To the second question many will be inclined to give the answer, "Yes". I see in Italian Fascism a definite threat to the democratic systems of government existing to-day. Under them, almost without exception, there are grave currents of discontent and of a sense of indignity. The waste that seems to be a necessary concomitant of administrations depending on voters, whose interests can be secured by the promise of expenditure which will come not out of, but into, their pockets is one evil. The loss of efficiency

and of resoluteness, coming as a consequence of subjecting policy to the constant censorship of uninformed critics, is another. The influence won by eloquent impudence as contrasted with honest ability is another. Few pretend nowadays that the ballot-box finds the best men to govern the country: the most that is claimed for the system is that it is the only possible one and that a sensible community can carry on in spite of its politicians.

. . . . .

But the threat of the example of Italian Fascism to much that is identified with "democracy" is not immediate. A nearer question is whether that Fascism, from its fostering of the nationalist spirit in its people, is likely to bring them into armed conflict with other peoples. That will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

### FASCISM IN FOREIGN RELATIONS

*The crucial test of the Fascist system—Has it a will to war?—“Poor relation” view of Italy—The population problem—Italy and the Balkans—The real danger point—Why the Balkans are a war plague spot.*

**I**N domestic politics, as following chapters will show, Fascism is making Italy to-day a new and contented Italy, and seems safe from all threat. Its portent to the peace of political parties abroad, which follow the methods of government by popular cajolery and bribery, is serious, but will make for it no trouble, yet awhile at any rate. But in foreign relations, in those foreign relations on which hang the issues of peace and war, is it as secure of quiet?

It is the aspect of Italian Fascism regarding which even a sympathetic observer may feel

some uneasiness. Can a nation be trained on a principle of exalted egoism and yet be restrained from allowing that egoism to bring it into conflict with its neighbours? That will be the crucial test of Mussolini's wisdom.

To the world outside of Italy the benefit, or otherwise, of Fascism to the Italian people will have no particular importance, except to those few who recognise that a growth of prosperity in one country does not entail a loss of prosperity by another country, but is of general benefit to the world. Even those few, if they judge that Fascism, whilst serving the prosperity of Italy, is likely to make Italy a troublesome neighbour, will think the good is more than counter-balanced by the ill results.

Despite a great deal of pretence to the contrary, the people of one country judge the actions of the people of another country almost wholly by the convenience or inconvenience of those actions to themselves. Thus—to cite one illustration—the United States tariff policy of seeking to secure as far as possible a monopoly of her home markets for her home manufacturers is judged by foreign observers without any reference

to the good or the harm it does to the American people, but with sole reference to the inconvenience it may cause abroad; and is bitterly regarded as selfish even by those who are pursuing in their own spheres precisely the same policy. Similarly, the British Imperial policy of restrictions on rubber exports, intended to safeguard that planters should get good prices for their rubber (planters are located chiefly within the British Empire) is regarded as selfish in the United States without any reference back to her own tariff policy or her own cotton policy. Practical statesmanship thus in every country follows a policy of seeking to serve solely the interests of its own people, sometimes, though rarely, using a breadth of outlook in its search which leads to a recognition that national interests can be reconciled with international interests to mutual advantage.

But in one respect there is some measure of common consent, that a nation in its policy should consider not only itself but its neighbours, and that is in respect of issues of peace and war. A trade or a migration policy which inflicts bitter inconveniences by its “selfishness”, *i.e.*, its ex-

clusive thought for a national end, is tolerated: but a policy which is thought to be shaping for armed hostilities arouses a general resentment which may organise against it dangerous combinations. A will to war is recognised as a threat to all civilised States: especially at an epoch like the present when a world-wide war has threatened the very existence of humane institutions. To counteract a will to war in one nation, other nations will sacrifice to some extent their particular national aims for the sake of a common safeguard.

Italy to-day has embarked on a policy which has already renewed her strength mightily, and which promises to bring her to much greater strength; but if she has a will to war she might lose all that has been gained and destroy the fair hope of the future by entering upon a struggle which, though appearing easy at the outset, could develop to an extent beyond her power to carry to a successful end.

*If* she has a will to war? That question in effect comes down to this, since Mussolini commands the unlimited confidence of the Italian people: Is Mussolini a man of war or is he as

Palmerston was in British politics? Palmerston used warlike language but avoided war, partly, he would claim, by the use of that language. Mussolini uses warlike language. Is it with the idea of making or avoiding war?

I did not ask him that question. There is no point in asking a busy Dictator useless questions. He would reply, of course, that he was a man of peace, as his every action showed; that when he was peremptory and forceful to Greece in the matter of the murder of Italian boundary officials in Albania, it was in the true interests of peace; that, in his courteous firmness to Jugo-Slavia in the matter of the Tirana Treaty, his motive is the same; that if he is inclined to deny the League of Nations the settlement of some question it is only because of his knowledge that its intervention would not serve the cause of peace. He would reply in that way, if he replied at all, and one's knowledge of his mind would be exactly as it was before; no more, no less.

But I did endeavour, from an examination of Mussolini's speeches and of his actions, and of his motives so far as they are clear, and from inquiry among foreign diplomatic observers, to



ITALIAN CAMEL BATTERY, NORTH AFRICA





COMMEMORATING "THE MARCH ON ROME" IN THE GRAND SQUARE, TRIPOLI



come to some reasonable basis of prognostication.

Glance at some of the aspects of the problem. Italy up to 1922 was regarded undoubtedly by other of the Powers in the light of a "poor relation". She was in, rather than of, their council. It was not difficult to hear discussions in some quarters based on the assumption that the Italian was below the level of European vigour, steadiness and intelligence; and that Italy, to become a really great nation, should be put under the tutelage of — or —.

Obviously Fascism can give no countenance to that idea. Its working hypothesis is that the Italian people are at least equal to any other people. To admit an inferiority in foreign relations would cut at the roots of its home authority. Thus Italy must look the Great Powers "straight in the face", and put her case with no whispered humbleness.

Those versed in diplomacy will agree, I think, that there is no war danger in that; rather otherwise, so long as the case thus put does not go beyond reason nor beyond the power that

exists to make it respected. A typical instance in diplomatic history was the United States declaration of the Monro Doctrine against any European extension of influence on the American continent. That declaration was in a high degree peremptory: it was to some European thought unreasonable. But it had the value of letting the European Powers know "where they were". At any rate they were not left to blunder into war with the United States and, calculating that the threat contained in the declaration did not go beyond what the United States could probably make good, they let it stand. Its effect has been on the whole for peace rather than for war.

Similarly Mussolini's downright and forcible declarations that Italy must be regarded as a Great Power, and be treated with the same degree of "protocol" as France or Great Britain, can help his domestic policy without endangering the peace of the world. The question I discuss now is not whether a Great Power should insist, in its relations with smaller nations and with the League of Nations, that it has a position of special privilege and responsibility. Perhaps, in a happier era to come, a great Power will consent

to come down to level terms with a minor Power in carrying on a controversy. At present they do not. It is to the world's advantage, not disadvantage, that all ambiguity about Italy's status in international affairs should be removed, that there should be no possibility of an unexpected trouble developing because of any element of uncertainty on this point.

. . . . .

The population problem of Italy—is that a danger to world peace? In particular is the Fascist religious-ethical view—that any artificial means to limit the natural increase of population are immoral—a danger? Fascism preaches early marriages and carries on a vigorous campaign, by precept and by the suppression so far as practicable of contra-conceptive practices, against limitation of families. Further it has a vigorous public health and infant welfare policy. The rate of natural increase of the Italian population is likely to advance under the Fascist regime.

Can Italian territory absorb the increase, or must the demand for migration outlets become more pressing at the same time as there is a tendency to restrict the entry of Italian

colonists (France and the United States show this tendency)?

Italy, considering her lack of natural industrial resources (*e.g.* coal and iron) and the proportion of her territory which is mountainous, is already a very thickly populated country. But the new policy is adding to her natural resources by intensive development of water power, by the improvement of agriculture, and by the very wise decision made this year to establish at a number of ports Free Trade areas where *entrepot* trades and manufactures can be established without any Customs restrictions on the import of raw materials. These “free ports” are likely to become not only thriving mercantile centres but convenient places for the establishment of industries such as ship-building, steel works, etc., which can take advantage of the comparative economy of Italian labour without having to consider Italian Customs duties if they are sending their products to other countries.

There is no reason, in my opinion, why the Italian Mother Country and the Italian colonies should not, if they were compelled to, find room for the growth of the Italian population for a few years to come.

At the same time, as a result of better discipline, the Italian-born will become more welcome migrants in countries which have been inclined in the past to look at them with some disfavour. Canada, for example, is now much better disposed to Italian colonists. Australia is moving in the same direction. Perhaps the United States will do likewise in due course.

The position as I see it, then, is that Italian population will grow at a greater rate than heretofore: but that the new economic policy will find room at home for many more Italians; that as Italy amasses capital she will be able to develop more vigorously her colonies in Africa, and thus find fresh openings for her children; that the Italian type will become more welcome as a colonist in foreign countries which have empty lands; consequently that there is no near danger of Italy being forced to expand by the conquest of some neighbour's vineyard.

Nevertheless Italy certainly will continue to stress with all possible emphasis her need of new territories where she may keep her expanding population "under the flag", and will not accept, except as a regrettable necessity, the outflow of

Italians to countries where they are absorbed by other nations. If the situation should come about of "vacant possession" of some convenient undeveloped territory, I imagine that the utmost strength of Italy's effort would be directed towards obtaining some form of suzerainty of that territory: and that she has fair confidence in her ability to form a sufficiently strong combination to assert her claims without any struggle of arms.

The idea of Italy engaging in a war with another Power to extend her territory I think should be rejected as being outside the range of a policy which is realist in its core however much wrapped up in glowing rhetoric.

Neither the domestic necessity of making it plain that Italy will no longer sit on any lower step of the European dais, nor the fact that the Italian race would be more comfortable if it could have more elbow room, is the real point of anxiety. That is in the Balkan Peninsula.

The Italian peninsula has always felt its fate to be linked in a great measure with the Balkan Peninsula. The Roman Empire, when it found

threats and difficulties increasing, moved its capital to the Balkans because there was the strategic centre of the then known world, the point from which Asia and Africa as well as Europe could be dominated. When, later, the Roman Empire was divided into the Eastern and the Western Empires with Constantinople as the capital of the former, the Western capital was moved at one time from Rome to Ravenna on the Adriatic Sea, since control of the Adriatic was deemed to be of prime importance. Later the Republic of Venice built up her power with the Adriatic as its base. The United Italy of the nineteenth century saw that the Adriatic was to Italy as the North Sea to England, and based her naval programme on the possibility of having to meet the Austrian Fleet in that sea. The destruction of Austrian naval power has left for the time being Italy free from any naval menace in the Adriatic, but she still has a special and an inescapable interest in that sea, and consequently to some extent in its littoral opposite her coasts.

Italy having thus a special interest in the Balkan Peninsula (which was recognised by Great

Britain, France and Russia in the Pact of London, 1913) is doomed to walk in dangerous paths. The Balkan Peninsula is the “war plague spot” of Europe. Always a blood mist has steamed up from its glens. Before the days of written history, oral tradition and the facts that the archæologist can glean from the sites of ancient civilisations tell of great wars in this cockpit of races. Successive waves of invasion passed along its valleys, successive Empires sought to entrench themselves in its area, from which they might hope to oversee the civilised world. As invasions passed, as Empires rose and fell, they left little residual shreds of races, haunted by dreams of past greatness, enraged by oppressions or by thwarted ambitions, fiercely warring among themselves and thus constantly inviting new invasions.

Records of ghastly cruelty alternate with records of sublime courage; of lunatic ambition with noble self-sacrifice in the Balkans. It is the land of Thermopylæ; and near Thermopylæ a Greek Emperor, having captured a Bulgar army, blinded every man of it except that the centurions were left with one eye each to guide

their fellows home. It is the land of Kossovo, where Serbia's Emperor led Serbia's chivalry to a common death in heroic struggle against the Turks; and in Serbia, for generations after, the Serbian women, when maternity was inflicted upon them by Turkish ravishers, strangled the children at birth. A grim and dreadful, a glorious and shining tract, this Peninsula.

The germs of war have never had a chance of being exterminated there. The Roman Empire gave it its one long period of peace. Then the battles of the Goths and Romans soaked it in blood until the Fourth Century when the Tartar hordes made their first appearance. If one race and one race only had over-run the Roman settlements in the Balkans, the result might have been a stable nation (there were nascent signs of a Gothic-Roman State before the Huns came). But every invader came to the Balkans, and every invader left a scrap of his race there. From the Fourth Century, for a full thousand years the Balkans knew constantly the extreme horrors of racial war: and the present Balkan races took their shape in that welter of blood. The decadent Roman Empire at Constantinople became the

Byzantine or Greek Empire. A Bulgar Empire rose and had a very brief spell of power, and against the Greek Empire waged wars of fiendish cruelty on both sides. A Serbian Empire had a more stable, but still a brief and chequered, career. A Roumanian nation (descendants of the Roman Emperor Trajan's Colony from Italy) held, with difficulty and subject to frequent inroads, Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania against barbarians from the north and their neighbours from the south.

The Turkish invasion brought another catastrophe. The Turk, aiming to conquer Europe, found his natural path by the Balkans. His great plan of the conquest of Europe was not realised, though he penetrated as far as Vienna, made the Mediterranean for a time a Turkish lake, and in dealing with the Christian nations of Europe took up the attitude of a supreme ruler towards vassals; he would not sign treaties, his utmost grace was to grant truces. In the Balkan Peninsula he remained as a conqueror, mainly because the Christian States were divided among themselves, and hated one another more than they hated the Turk.

In the Nineteenth Century the Peninsula was not allowed a prospect of stable peace because, whilst the Turkish European Empire was obviously doomed, the Powers could not agree as to a successor. Russia aimed at dominance, and in the Crimean War Great Britain, France and Piedmont were united to resist that ambition. The next powerful claimant was the German Empire, which hoped for a German dominion from the Baltic to the Ægean. The Greeks, the Roumanians, the Bulgars, the Serbs also kept alive ambitions. The problem might have been solved by the formation of a Balkan United States, and in 1912-13 that seemed a possibility. But the mutual jealousies of Serb, Greek, Bulgar—fostered by the German Powers—were too strong, though the Balkan War of 1912-13 drove the Turkish Empire almost completely out, and might have been the beginning of a united Balkans. The World War, 1914-18, destroyed the German dream of dominating the Balkans, but did nothing to help the peoples of the Peninsula towards unity, rather exacerbated the mutual hatreds, and left this Peninsula as much as ever a hot-bed of fierce rivalries and of international intrigues.

Three Empires have definitely lost any claim to be allowed to take the Peninsula within their “sphere of influence”: the Turkish, the Russian and the German solutions of the Balkan problem are alike out of the question. The solution by one of the Balkan States obtaining a supreme position and dominating all the others is equally out of the question. The solution of a Federation of the Balkan States seems hopeless in view of the mutual hatreds and jealousies, showing a tendency to increase rather than diminish.

If the Balkans are not to be the seed-bed of the next great war, there are only two practical alternatives: that the nations interested in peace should exercise jointly a benevolent and unselfish supervision and insist on the Balkan States keeping peace and good order: or that some one Power should be allowed by agreement that task. Each alternative has the common difficulty, that of keeping the suzerainty benevolent and unselfish.

Italy, it seems to me, believes that the best solution of the Balkan problem would be a recognition by the other Powers that she has a special interest in maintaining peace there; and prefers

that solution to the other possible alternative, a form of tutelage by the League of Nations. Perhaps she would not put the case with that directness: but that, I think, is the position. If so, it shows a wish to live dangerously, a willingness to venture into an arena where the Russian Empire, and the German Empire, garnered more pain than profit, where alliances run in terms of hours and ambitions have no relation to realities. (I have met Macedonians who dream of reviving the Empire of Alexander on the basis of a successful village raid!)

Practical caution would suggest to the Italian nation to keep their commitments in the Balkans to the smallest degree consistent with their own security. A false step there might involve the gravest consequences: and false steps are easily made in an area where for many centuries war or insurrection have been regarded as part of the normal condition of life.

Will Mussolini walk warily enough? People of diplomatic authority who have the best means of knowing, say with a reasonable degree of confidence, "Yes".

. . . . .

To recapitulate: I do not think that there is the slightest danger to the peace of Europe in Mussolini's emphasis of Italy's status as a Great Power, nor in Italy's population problem, but in Italy's position *vis-à-vis* the Balkan Peninsula there is a possible ground of anxiety.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FASCISM HAS ITS CAMPAIGNS

*The campaign against malaria—Keeping the popular interest—The campaign for better wheat—Italy's agricultural position—The campaign against waste—Great reforms in the Public Services—The campaign to develop hydro-electric power.*

**I**T is clear that Mussolini does not *wish* to run any risk of disturbing the progress of Italy towards a new dignity and a new prosperity by engaging in a war: and the balance of instructed opinion is that he is prudent enough, and skilful enough, to avoid being brought into a war against his wishes. But Fascism in Italy wages a series of “campaigns” in the spirit and the language of the battle-field, though their purpose is purely peaceful. The Fascist system has a true appreciation of human nature, especially of Italian human nature, and knows the value

of investing a common-place task with heroic language. A trouble with all revolutions is that when they have achieved their end, interest is inclined to slacken; stagnation threatens. The tumult and the fighting have ceased. What to do now?

Mussolini, with a mind as wily as that of Odysseus, has contrived many things to which the combative spirit of his Black Shirts may be safely directed.

Mosquitoes for instance. They have many resemblances to corrupt politicians: are industriously vocal, parasitically greedy, and can be pestilential. In the marshy areas of Italy they spread malaria, which is one of the chief causes of death in the country, and keeps over a quarter of a million people constantly on the sick list.

Italy before the Fascist revival was aware that the malarial mosquito of the marshes was a danger, and there was an organised effort to cope with the pest by drainage and by the planting of the Australian eucalyptus tree. But in many quarters there was a strong prejudice among the peasantry against this work. In one district, for example, where the land was wonderfully

fertile, but miasmic, every effort of the more progressive land proprietors to drain the soil and diminish the miasmic vapours and the facilities for breeding mosquitos was strongly opposed by the small holders and labourers whose health was being sacrificed in working the land. They imagined that the rich hay crops and the fat pasturage for cattle would be ruined by drainage, and preferred to suffer from malarial fever than to spoil the land, as they thought—this though malaria kept the average term of life down to less than twenty years! In other districts, even though there was no such strong hostility arising from ignorant prejudice, there was slackness of administration in the necessary drainage work, in the regular distribution of quinine and other febrifuges.

Now Fascism is tolerant neither of prejudices nor of slackness. Its chief virtue is vigorous, peremptory activity. The marshes of the fatherland are being attacked as if they were the encampments of an enemy—as indeed they are. Where drainage is feasible, drains are being cut with the systematic vigour of an army consolidating a position won with defensive trenches.

Where drainage is not the best remedy the stagnant pools are being stocked with little fishes which eat up the larvæ of the mosquitoes and check their multiplication. An oil film is also employed to smother the larvæ. The houses of workers in malarial districts are protected with mosquito-proof doors and windows. Quinine distribution is undertaken in the spirit of supplying the soldier in the trenches with his rations. All the means are energetically applied which the Americans made familiar when they set out to free the Panama Isthmus from Yellow Jack and malaria as a preliminary to cutting the Panama Canal, and with which the British are regenerating the climate of East Africa.

The mosquito is against Mussolini and the regeneration of Italy. To death with the mosquito!

I took an opportunity to study the anti-malaria work in the Pontine marshes, that stretch of land south from Rome over which Circe's island—which is not an island but a promontory with a narrow neck of land joining it to the marshes—broods. Soon it will be as old-fashioned for Italian men to be turned to shivering hulks by

malaria as for sailors to be turned to swine by the spells of that legendary enchantress.

With this vigorous campaign to win back for the nation a manifest *Italia irredenta* no pacifist will quarrel. But as it is conducted by the Fascists it is invested with all the interest of a military campaign. The man in the street talks about it. Posters in the railway carriages and on the hoardings announce its bulletins.

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Another "war" is the wheat war. The Italian is a great grain eater. For his comfort he wants as much wheat as the Englishman, though in addition to wheat he consumes much maize, rice and other grains. To wheat-growing the Italian has always given faithful and earnest labour. But his methods of cultivation have been somewhat primitive; the seed he plants not of the best quality; fertilisers not used generously enough. The wheat war aims to change all that. Modern agricultural machinery is pouring into the country. (Importations of this machinery which were represented by the figure 20 in 1922 were represented by the figure 90 in 1925 and an even higher figure in 1926.)

The wooden ploughshare rapidly gives place to the steel share. The agricultural motor is coming into general use. This is put in terms of rearming the agriculturist with modern weapons, and as such arouses enthusiasm.

Most important in the wheat war operations is the movement to improve the quality of the seed used. In many districts the seed, drawn from old, tired-out strains, could not, with the best of cultivation, give good crops. Now seed is being reinvigorated on Fascist lines. For the new Italy, new seed. All over the country eager professional workers are disciplining to a more vigorous habit the old wheats. I heard of one Italian doctor, long resident in London, who has given up a good career and the care of human bodies there to devote himself to this betterment of the staff of life in his native land.

The "wheat war" is carried on along practical lines. One simple tactic is to give wheats that have lost vigour in the hot plains a fresh stimulus by planting them in hill country. Then the reinvigorated strain can go back with new strength to the plains.

Last year, though it was a very bad year climatically, Italy produced six-sevenths of her total wheat consumption, the yield per acre being 40 per cent. above the average. That she will very shortly be quite self-supporting as regards wheat is a certainty.

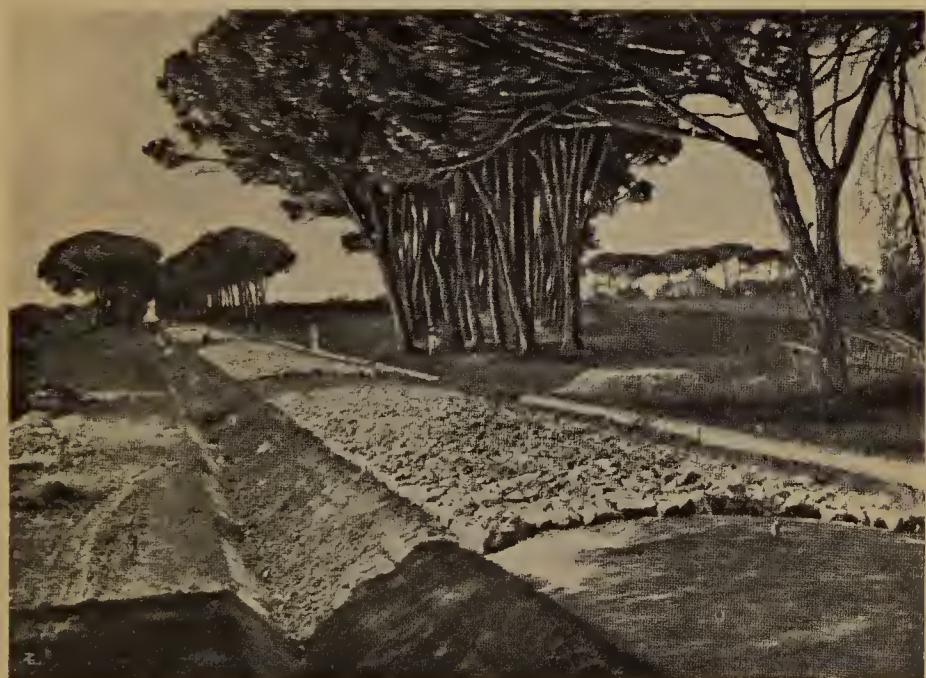
The legislative steps taken by the Fascist Government to carry on the grain campaign were briefly these. A heavy protective duty of 40 lire per quintal (about £4 per ton) was imposed on foreign wheat imports—wheat had been admitted duty-free before on the argument that the nation could not produce enough for its own requirements. At the same time articles used in grain production (such as gasolene for agricultural motors) were freed from duty. Liberal grants were provided for travelling agricultural educational institutions, for demonstration farms and for local agricultural organisations. In each province was set up a Grain Committee to co-ordinate the educational work in regard to seed cultivation and fertilisers. Mussolini himself took charge of the "General Headquarters"—the National Grain Committee of nine members. This Grain Committee dictates the strategy of

the campaign which is, in effect, that there is to be no attempt to increase the area sown with wheat: the rise in production is to come from better cultivation, better seed, better manuring.

The wheat area could hardly be increased—except in reclaimed marsh lands—without detriment to other useful crops. Italy is very closely cultivated, the cultivated area being divided into five agrarian zones. The first zone is that of the “agrumi” (oranges, lemons and similar fruits). It takes in a great part of Sicily, extends along the southern and western coasts of Sardinia, along the Ligurian Riviera from Bordighera to Spezia and along the Adriatic and in some regions of Calabria. This zone could not profitably be taken from fruit-growing; Italy hopes to improve her orange crops as well as her grain crops. The region of “olives” comprises the Sicilian valleys and part of the mountain slopes, the valleys near the coasts of Sardinia, and on the mainland it extends from Liguria and from the southern extremities of Romagna down to Apulia and to Calabria, with districts near the lakes of upper Italy and in Venetia. The “wine” area begins on the sunny slopes of the Alpine spurs and in



MOTOR PLOUGHS AT WORK



ONE OF THE NEW ROADS TO DEVELOP A FARMING DISTRICT



the Alpine villages open towards the south, and extends over the plains of Lombardy and Emilia. It covers the mountain slopes in Sardinia and in Sicily, and the Calabrian Alps and the whole length of the Apennines, and the hills of Tuscany and Montferrato in Piedmont. The region of "chestnuts" extends from the valleys to the highest plateaux of the Alps, along the northern slopes of the Apennines in Liguria, Modena, Tuscany, Romagna, Umbria, and the Marches, and along the southern Apennines to the Calabrian and Sicilian ranges, as well as to the mountains of Sardinia. The "wooded" region covers the Alps and the Apennines above the chestnut level.

The range of cereal cultivation embraces wheat, maize, rice, rye, barley, oats and millet. Potatoes, beets and turnips, and various legumes (which form a great proportion of the food of the people) are important crops, as are tobacco, hemp, flax, cotton, nuts and mulberry trees (for silkworms) and, of course, vines. About 30 per cent. of the total area is needed for the pasturage of sheep, goats and swine and horse-breeding and donkey-breeding. (The Italian horse is usually on the small side but a gallant little creature,

showing well in light harness when his driver decorates him with a proud plume of pheasants' feathers.)

Pre-war, pre-Fascist Italy gave no reason for criticism of the industry of the people. Indeed observers who noted the farms of the Venetian Plain, with mulberry trees to meet the voracious appetite of the silk-worms; vines trained on those mulberry trees; and between the trees and the vines maize and legumes cultivated, would conclude that there was no room for improvement, that the limit of possible production had been reached. The Fascist agricultural effort cannot, in fact, aim at increasing considerably the area of any one crop except at the expense of another one equally important to the national welfare. It must concentrate on raising the yield per acre.

The wheat campaign actually opened with the 1924-1925 season. It had not the best weather luck but raised production from about 4,600,000 tons in 1924 to about 6,600,000 tons in 1925. The 1926 season was very bad climatically, but the yield will be about 6,000,000 tons. (It takes about 7,000,000 tons to satisfy Italy's present needs.)

It will be interesting to quote the official Fascist view of the duty imposed upon wheat, horrifying as will be its argument to Free Traders:

The duty of 40 lire per quintal on the 10,000,000 quintals, which must be imported this year to make up the crop deficit, represents 400,000,000 lire apportioned among the consumers. The country is confident that this burden will be abundantly paid back by the surplus represented by the 10,000,000 or more quintals of greater production obtained through the grain battle, which will signify a value of about 2,000,000,000 lire. Hence the people will gain about 1,600,000,000 lire.

Supreme confidence in victory, *i.e.*, in an ultimate national production of the nation's full needs of wheat, is felt. If that is achieved it will free Italy of the necessity of exporting yearly a huge gold value for wheat, and will redress the unfavourable trade balance as between visible imports and visible exports. To quote again from an official statement:

The certainty of victory is based upon the boundless faith in Prime Minister Mussolini as active commander of the battle, and is also founded upon the conviction that the enemies of the Italian producers are not the soil and atmospheric conditions but the lack of a modern

farming technique. There is no question but that the present movement will do much to eliminate old prejudices on this score. The farmer is enthusiastic as he has never been before about efficient choice of seeds and their application, about the use of modern machines and about the wide application of artificial fertilizers.

Yet another Fascist war, the conduct of which might be noted with advantage by other countries, is against waste in the Public Services. Here again the language of the soldier is used to illustrate what would be otherwise a dull economic argument. The public official, whether in the railways or any other service, who does not work with the utmost energy is as a soldier of Italy who shirks his duty in the trenches. The redundant official is a deserter who takes his pay and rations but refuses to fight. "Fascism," to quote from one of the statements given to me by Mussolini, "regards the bond linking a State and its servants as being essentially ethical; a State humiliates its servants by placing their activity on a purely mercenary footing."

To put this principle into working a simplified comprehensive form of organisation for all public services has been set up; redundant departments

abolished; and the remaining departments subjected to a systematic reform directed towards economy of personnel and higher efficiency in working.

The railways will best illustrate the results. Every regular visitor to Italy has noted the enormous improvement in the railway services during the last few years. Dirt, unreliability and unpunctuality have been abolished. Where the conditions used to suggest the Near East they now suggest Switzerland or England. Whilst this improvement, or rather transformation, has been effected, the financial results to the State have been enormously improved. The working of the railways showed a deficit of £12,000,000 in 1920-21; in 1924-25 (the last year for which there are official statistics) it showed a surplus of £2,000,000. The work done by the railways has increased 50 per cent., whilst the coal consumption per ton moved has fallen 25 per cent. and the staff has been largely reduced.

In the postal and telegraph services the same success in the war against waste has been achieved. These services are now efficient and reliable, and where they used to show a deficit of £5,000,000

yearly they now show a small surplus. The telephone service has been de-nationalised and put into private hands.

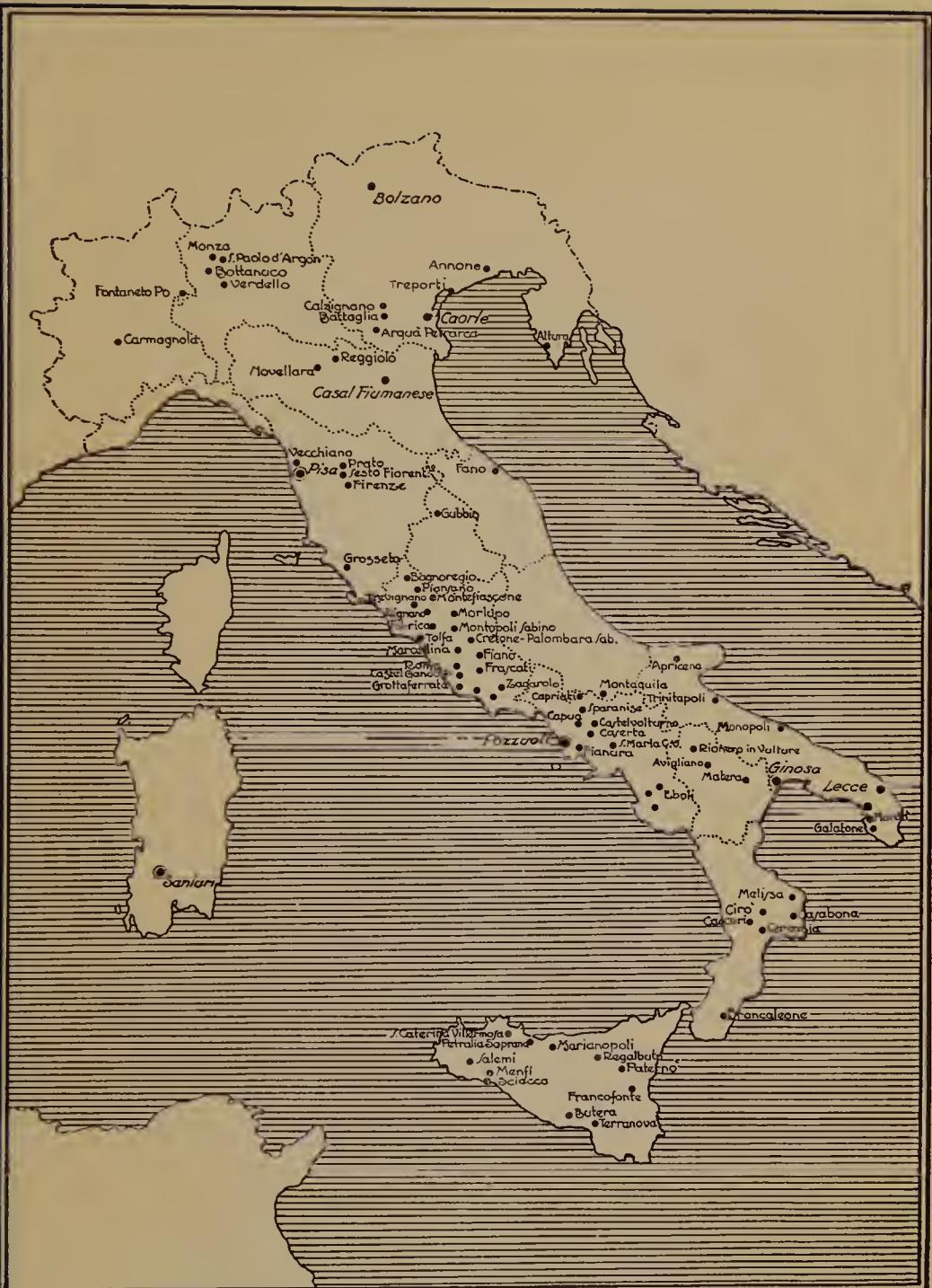
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Yet another economic campaign is for the higher development of hydro-electric power. This campaign is based in the Fascist propaganda on the necessity, not of economising imports of coal, (as I expected) but of raising the standard of living of the Italian worker. It gave me a strong impression of the comprehensive sweep of Fascist policy to hear this explained by an economic expert:

“You see the Italian, who used to eat very little meat, learned during the war to want more meat. Much of this meat, for which the demand is steadily increasing, must be imported. The tendency is a good one, and not to be discouraged. The Fascist policy is to improve the standard of living of the masses of the people.”

“Exactly: but I do not see quite the connection between this and the development of water power.”

“We are working on a closely co-ordinated national policy. In the grain campaign we aim to dispense with foreign imports and thus to set



SITES OF EX-SERVICEMEN'S SETTLEMENTS



our trade balance right; success in that campaign will suffice for that object. But in our campaign to develop more hydro-electric power we do not aim to cut out our coal imports. We recognise that we must buy something in order to sell something. We recognise, too, that to substitute hydro-electric energy wholly for steam energy is impracticable economically. The best system is to use one to supplement the other. Accordingly we look to the increase of hydro-electric power, not as a means to dispense with coal power, but as a means to increase largely manufacturing production and agricultural production. We shall give the human machine more auxiliary power. More power means more production, and more production makes possible a higher standard of living, for the benefit of it must be shared fairly between Capital and Labour. Thus more electricity will mean not less coal but more meat and other things."

"White coal" or "white oil"—electric power derived from water is designated by either term in Italy—is thus being intensively developed as a means of giving a better standard of life to a population which has grown from 27 to 42

millions in half a century, which can draw upon no great natural mineral resources to help its resources, and which has in the past had to import 25 per cent. of its food supplies.

Italy has had a good record in hydro-electric development for many years. The Fascist administration has raised the record from good to excellent. Before citing some facts about its growth, perhaps a few words of explanation of hydro-electrical power generation for the benefit of the general reader will not be taken amiss by the expert, since a good deal of popular misconception exists on the subject. Many people think that, given a waterfall, the production of cheap electrical power is almost a routine matter. That is very far from being the case. Indeed, even with the ideal type of waterfall, there is call for a high achievement of scientific organisation to get electrical power from water at a cheaper rate than from coal; and by no means every waterfall is of the ideal type, providing plentiful energy at a fairly constant rate throughout the year. When the hydro-electrical engineer has to face problems of falls which under the conditions of Nature vary considerably with

the seasons—and that is usually the case—his task of economically competing with coal ranges from extreme difficulty to impossibility.

The question would take on quite another aspect if ever science evolves a method of storing electricity cheaper and less bulky than the present storage cell. The discovery of such a method was announced some years ago with the reported authority of Edison. But the announcement was no more, evidently, than the statement of a hope, and it has not been realised. To store electrical energy in any great quantities at a low cost in equipment and maintenance is still impossible. If ever it does become possible truly the face of the world will be changed, the miasmic breath of the petrol motor-car will no longer afflict the streets, and the steam locomotive will become obsolete.

But at present—speaking in terms of the economic employment of energy—you must use electricity as you make it, fresh from the turbine. A waterfall which is a torrent when the snows are melting or the rains falling, a trickle at other times, is not much use to the hydro-electric engineer unless his plans can face the cost of

storing the water in dams to secure a constant source of power, and still get energy at a cheaper rate than coal can provide.

Hydro-electrical development in Italy is meeting the problems of the usually intermittent character of water energy in part by storage dams; in part by a "grid" of high tension wires which allow an area employing electric energy to be fed from different sources at different seasons of the year; in part by reinforcing water-energy plants with coal-burning plants. When the water is flowing its power is used; at other times the steam engine takes up the work.

Now for some figures—not too many figures; sparingly used they illustrate; too abundantly used they confuse. In 1898 Italy developed about 87,000 k.w. of hydro-electric power; in 1908 about 1,240,000 k.w.; in 1922 about 1,594,000 k.w.; in 1925 about 2,369,000 k.w. Note the ratio of progress: less than 2 per cent. per annum in the fourteen years between 1908 and 1922; about 16 per cent. per annum in the three years of the Fascist regime. The year 1926, when full figures are available, will show an even higher rate of increase and, judging from

works in construction or shortly to be put in construction, the year 1930 will see the present production of electrical energy doubled, and every province with an abundant supply of current for lighting, for transport, for agriculture and for industry. At present the consumption is shared between: lighting 9 per cent. of the total, traction 10 per cent. of the total, and industry 81 per cent. of the total. Agriculture has hardly begun to be a consumer as yet.

Such are the campaigns for which Fascist Italy organises the combative spirit—campaigns against the malarial mosquito, for better wheat, against waste in the public services, for the fuller use of the nation's water power. Another great campaign, that against the waste of energy by industrial disputes, demands a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER IX

### FASCISM AND THE LABOUR QUESTION

*The Fascist Labour Charter—Labour Day in Rome—Fascism recognises the Capitalist system—Abolishing strikes and lock-outs—The Syndical organisation of industry—Some comparisons with other countries.*

“**I**T is impossible,” declares a Fascist official statement “to contest the profound originality of the new Italian corporative organisation. Its precedents cannot be found . . . not in the Medieval Guilds nor in the sporadic American attempts of 1888 and Australian ones of 1894 to settle labour questions, which were limited absolutely to the question of arbitration.”

Fascism, I note, has two attitudes towards precedents. Sometimes it is eager to claim that what it proposes is only a revival of a good old Roman or Italian method. At other times it

insists on absolute originality. It takes pride indifferently, in being evolutionary and in being revolutionary. As this Fascist treatment of the Labour question is one of supreme interest to all the civilised world, I propose to examine it comparatively, and perhaps will show that it is not quite such a revolutionary departure from precedents as its parents think.

On April 21, 1927, the Fascist Labour Charter was proclaimed in Rome with full dramatic ceremony. That date is "Labour Day" in Italy, which will have none of the International Labour Day, May 1. Of all things Fascism suspects "internationalism." Italians must be Italian, first and last. The national Labour Day was chosen by Fascism with a thought for patriotic effect; it is the legendary birthday of ancient Rome, the day on which Romulus founded the city. Modern Rome maintains a living souvenir of Romulus and his wolf foster-mother—the little den of wolves kept in the gardens of the Capitoline Hill; and to the Roman small boy it is a matter of pride to learn to imitate well the cry of a wolf so that he may of an evening take post outside this den and start the wolves howling.

Romulus is not a dead tradition, and “Rome’s Birthday” was always a festival; by making it also Labour Day Fascism has made sure of a good demonstration, and has also made sure that the keynote of Labour speeches will be civic patriotism.

Labour Day, 1927, in Rome, with its proclamation of “the Labour Charter” was certainly impressive. Deputations of workers’ guilds, of Fascist Militia, of the schoolchildren’s Ballila, came to the capital from all the surrounding towns and filled the streets with banners and bands. The Labour Charter was first proclaimed in the Piazza del Popolo, and from there orderly and enthusiastic processions marched to the other great squares, the demonstrations coming to a dramatic finale at the Colosseum. The impression sought, and apparently given, was that the Charter solved Labour questions once and for all.

As a matter of fact the Charter declared little that was not already the established law of the land, and ignored many decisions which had been already put into effect. To quote it in full would not give a clear and complete picture of the

Labour system of Italy to-day. I shall, therefore, summarise its contents, together with those of various earlier Labour laws and decrees.

Fascism recognises the capitalist system, but makes the condition that it must work in close sympathy with the national interest. "The State considers private initiative in the field of production to be the most efficacious and most useful instrument in the interests of the nation. But private organisation of production being, like private property and capital, a function of national interest, the organiser of a company or undertaking is responsible towards the State for collaboration between the productive forces entailing reciprocal rights and duties between them. The assistant technician, employee, or workman is an active collaborator in the economic undertaking, the direction of which lies in the hands of the employer, who has the responsibility for it."

Employers and employees in all undertakings are invited to join the associations formed for each branch of enterprise. They may neglect to do so, but in that case must still obey the conditions for carrying on the industry—wages,

hours, etc.—which are negotiated between representatives of these two associations. The representatives, apparently, may ultimately be elected by the associations, by votes of their own members, but at present they are to be chosen, in some cases at any rate, by the Government. The reason given for this is that in many of the associations, being newly formed, no machinery exists for election; but, as one repeatedly observes, Fascism has a dislike of elections. In the first stage, at any rate, the Government makes certain that the delegates, both from the employers and the employees, who will sit on the joint council governing the industry, are persons who will be in sympathy with the Government's aims.

Thus there is created for every industry a governing Syndic. Ordinarily the Syndic, it is expected, will decide amicably the conditions of the industry. But in the case of stubborn disagreement between the employers' representatives and the workers' representatives, the points at issue will be decided by Courts of Industrial Arbitration, which are linked up with the ordinary Courts of Appeal. An Industrial Court will be

made up of a President of the Court of Appeal (a judge of the first rank), two other members of the Court of Appeal (also judges) and two laymen, who are experts in problems of industry and labour.

Strikes and lock-outs are alike forbidden. Industries must carry on under the conditions which their Syndics agree, or the Labour Court lays down. The general "policy" of industry is defined as follows: "The highest degree of effective and economical production is the national interest, which all must serve; labour is a social duty; the State will leave the field of production to private initiative, but if that proves inefficient may assume control; in times of depression Capital and Labour must fairly divide the sacrifices necessary to keep the industry going; preference of employment must be given to workers who are ex-soldiers or who are members of the Fascist party and of the particular Fascist association in the industry." Provision is made for accident, sickness and unemployment insurance, also for a system of retirement allowances, proportionate to years of service.

Professional workers come under the system

equally with manual workers. The administration of the system is entrusted to a department of State, "The Ministry of Corporations", and the Prefects of the Provinces act under its direction in Labour matters. The Ministry of Corporations has an Advisory Council composed of the Minister, who presides, his Under-Secretary of State, the Director General of Labour of the Ministry of National Economy, a representative of each of the other Ministries of a rank not lower than that of General Director, two representatives of each of the legally recognised national syndical confederations, a representative of each of the legally recognised general confederations of employers and workers, and a representative of the National Foundation for Maternity and Infant Welfare.

To conclude this summary with an official Fascist description :

Italy rejects the extremist solution of the Russian social experiment, which vests in the forces of Labour alone the right to discipline juridically productive relations; but also rejects energetically the extremist pseudo-scientific American solution of Taylorism which, while admitting in a subordinate fashion a collaboration with

the labour element, claims exclusively for the employing class the right to organize production.

Bolshevism is the mysticism of manual labour: Taylorism is the mysticism of the machine. Between the two, Fascism, with a Latin spirit of reality, offers the first solution which brings forward clearly a third element, rising above all class conceptions: the State.

What it all amounts to in a sentence is that Fascism maintains that the carrying on of the industries of the country is a national necessity, superior to the "right to strike" or the "right to lock-out"; that the liberty of the worker or employer must be restricted accordingly; and that the best means of securing fair play in labour controversies is compulsory judicial arbitration.

Except for the degree of tightness of control there is nothing in this that has not been attempted before. It is, in fact, very close to the Wise Arbitration Act of New South Wales, 1901. That Act, aimed to abolish strikes and lock-outs absolutely, and to put an industrial row on the same plane of illegality as a street row. Mr. Wise went to the root of the difficulty of enforcing a decree equally on masters and men. If say,

the Brillat Company, capital £2,000,000, reserve funds £1,500,000, employing 1,000 workmen, takes a point in dispute with its men to a Court of Law, there is a simple way of enforcing a decision adverse to the Company. The funds of the Company can be attached. But it is not so clear how a decision adverse to the men can be enforced, supposing them unorganised, irresponsible. In what way can obedience be enforced? An Arbitration Court that can enforce its awards against one party and not against another is, to all intents and purposes, in the position of being able to find only one sort of verdict; and thus to earn, in time, derision.

The Wise scheme sought to organise the parties to industry on a basis of equal responsibility. The funds of the master were his guarantee of good faith. Well, the men must have funds too, as guarantee of their good faith. To band the workers into industrial unions for collective bargaining and to make the funds of these unions liable for the due observance of Arbitration Court decisions was Mr. Wise's policy. As part of that policy there was a provision in the Act allowing the Arbitration Court to declare "prefer-

ence to unionists" in any industry; that is to say, compelling the employer to employ a unionist in preference to a non-unionist, other things being equal. On the face of it that was a serious interference with the liberty of employers. Really it was an artful means of securing a due balance of responsibility in a Court of Justice between employer and employed. It tended to stability, for if the majority of the workers in an industry were unionists, paying into funds liable to be sequestrated for any offence against the industrial law, that gave them a sense of caution and responsibility.

Of course, the decree of "preference to unionists" was discretionary with the Arbitration Court. In case of a union exacting some political conformity or, otherwise making its conditions of membership onerous or tyrannical, it would not be decreed. "Preference to unionists" tempting the workers into trade unions, the funds of those trade unions forming the guarantee of labour obedience to the Arbitration Court decrees —that was the essence of the Wise Arbitration Act. Strikes on the part of workers, lock-outs on the part of the employers, were both declared

illegal. Any dispute as to wages, conditions, hours, had to be referred to the Arbitration Court. Its decisions were not subject to appeal, and were enforceable by any means open to another court of civil law.

The Wise Act went further. Not only was it to prevent strikes and lock-outs; it was also to put under the guidance of the Court all industrial conditions throughout the country. It had an elaborate system by which a decision come to by one group of workers and employers could, by a common rule, be made to apply to all in that trade; and an industry could come up for review of its conditions of labour without any preliminary dispute existing between employers and employed.

A later amendment of this Act (not sanctioned by the original author) brought it a little closer to the Fascist Labour policy by providing that workers defying a decree of the Court could not only be fined collectively through their union and individually, but also in cases of grave contumacy could be imprisoned.

The Wise Arbitration Act did not succeed in securing full industrial peace in New South Wales. It was hardly allowed a fair chance. There were

difficulties arising from the Federal constitutional system of Australia, which vetoed Federal interference in a State industry and State interference in an industry which extended over more than one State. It was unsympathetically administered by a Government succeeding that of its author and hostile to its principles. But under more favourable circumstances it might have made good. Yet it represented almost as much interference with the liberty of capitalists and workmen to attack by their quarrels the prosperity of the nation as does the legislation of Mussolini, and it was passed with the approval of the Labour Party in New South Wales.

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The English-speaking world will watch with interest the working out in practice of this Italian system of dealing with the Labour problem, and will study closely the possibility of applying any of its methods to their own conditions, particularly that of judicial arbitration in industrial disputes.

In the United States to-day the Labour problem is not a very acute one. An abundant prosperity gives the discontented worker the best of all

remedies, the prospect of easily getting another job, and gives to the employer the best incentive to keep on good terms with his staff. But that condition of prosperity may not be permanent, and in a period of depression Labour questions might be more troublesome; and, even under present circumstances, there is a huge national waste and inconvenience from strikes and lock-outs.

In Great Britain, which since the Armistice in 1918 has lost, by strikes and lock-outs and by the sullen “ca’ canny” spirit of bodies of workers carrying on under protest, more than the cost of a great war, the question of industrial peace is *the* crucial one of this generation. An historical study of the British Trade Unions shows them developing in the first instance along lines which contained the germs of the Italian Fascist system, seeking to become Guilds which would have authority to speak for their crafts. They had no policy of “class war”; their aim was, by fair collective bargaining with employers, to improve the lot of the worker in matters of wages, hours, and conditions of labour. The common sense of their founders was shown in the fairly

general rule prohibiting all discussions of religion and politics; the spirit of economic realism in the formation of special migration funds to assist surplus labour to find openings elsewhere; the high ideals of comradeship in the fact that officials were offered little recompense but the honour of service.

The British Trade Unions, if they had continued to develop on those lines and had had, in due course, their power to bargain reinforced by some system of judicial arbitration to settle otherwise irreducible issues between employers and workers, probably would have given Great Britain a settled state of industrial peace. But by an unhappy mischance the British Trade Union movement became involved in the Socialist political movement (as was the case with the Trade Unions in Italy until the Fascist revolution) and was encouraged in this by the legislature which, in a series of acts, legalised various political and anti-social activities.

The Italian Fascist Labour policy will seem to the Labour Socialist of Great Britain an abominable interference with the right of the "intelligentsia" to use workmen's industrial

associations as instruments for promoting a Marxian revolution. It will seem to some employers almost as objectionable, because of the limitations it places on the capitalist "to do as he likes with his own property". But if it is examined with an open mind it will appear reasonable in its main principle, and in most of its methods of ensuring respect for that principle. The peaceful carrying on of its industries *is* a high concern of the State, almost as important as the prohibition of armed insurrections. Since in the process of adjustment of social conditions—an adjustment to give a better chance in life to the masses of the people—there are certain to arise from time to time controversies between Capital and Labour, the State must take cognisance of these in some way or another.

Different countries have different ways; Russia sets up a "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" which enslaves the working community completely, but comforts them with the thought that, though they have no liberty, at any rate their masters are drawn from the lowest class of the community. The United States of America permits the organisation of workers into Trade Unions for collective

bargaining, but insists that they keep within the strict lines of industrial bargaining and gives them no privilege outside the Common Law; even "sympathetic action" by which a transport Trade Union would refuse to handle goods produced by "blackleg" labour is illegal; and the Trade Union operates constantly under the shadow of the threat of an "injunction" of the Courts declaring its strike activities illegal. Nevertheless, when workers fall out with the employers' organisations, there is no way of settling the issue except by strike and lock-out. Great Britain loads the dice in favour of the Trade Unions by giving them legal powers to boycott, to beset and intimidate and to commit other "torts" in carrying on strikes, and does not object to them becoming political organisations to promote a social revolution. But, as in the United States, the last resort in case of disagreement is the strike or lock-out. In Italy workers and employers in each industry must join their respective organisations and set up a joint council to settle controversies; failing success on the part of the joint council the issue must go to judicial decision just as any other

controversy between citizens. There can be no resort to force.

All may not agree with me that, in principle, the Italian Fascist method—which, I repeat, is very much the method which was sought to be enforced in New South Wales with the full sympathy of the Labour Party—is the best method. But no one can question that the Italian method, if it works effectively, will give that country an almost incalculable advantage over foreign competitors, whose operations are intermittently brought to a pause by strikes, and whose plans must always be based on the presumption of strikes being probable. A nation whose industries know no strikes will have in that an advantage of efficiency which will be of decisive value.

The question—will it work?—may be answered with some confidence in the affirmative. It *has* worked for five years. I could find no signs that its working had proved unpopular either with employers or workers.

## CHAPTER X

### ITALY'S FINANCES

*The Exchange position of the lira—The policy of deflation—Its industrial consequences—Reducing the cost of living—The “Littorio” loan—The National Budget—Wonderful economies—Taxation in Italy—Italy and Albania’s finances.*

THE chief point of interest in regard to the financial position of Italy to-day is that of the exchange value of the lira, the unit of national currency. During the World War, in common with other combatant countries (the United States alone excepted) Italy was obliged to inflate her currency. It was a way of “invisible borrowing”, taking from the value of the past savings of the people a certain proportion and using it as current revenue. The effects of currency inflation may be illustrated with the case of a suppositious country. This country,

let us say, putting figures in terms of sterling, had a debt of £5,000,000,000 due to its own people in their own paper money, which was a sound currency on a gold basis. It inflated its currency so that whereas before 25 units had been worth £1 gold, now it took 125 units to be worth £1 gold. The effect of that was to take four-fifths of the money this country's people had loaned to its Government. They had had £5,000,000,000 gold value in bonds; now they only had £1,000,000,000 gold value. The remaining £4,000,000,000 had been taken away from them, and used for the purposes of the Government. If subsequently—the crisis which had made inflation necessary having passed—the Government decides to deflate the currency and bring it back to the old standard, it restores its “invisible borrowings” until the holders of the old paper currency are in the same position as they were before inflation began. If it decides to stop deflation at a certain point, say at 100, or at 75 to the gold £, and to “revalorise” at that figure, it permanently writes off a proportion of its old debt.

To give particular examples: since the War Great Britain has deflated her currency to the full

extent so that the gold standard has been restored, with the £ at its old pre-war gold value; Finland, whose old mark was worth 25 to the £, has revalorised it at 193 to the £ and restored the gold standard at that rate for the mark. France and Italy have not yet announced definitely their intentions, but both are understood to aim at a certain degree of re-valorisation and then to stabilise.

In Italy the lira, worth of old 25 to the £, stood at an average of 121.15 to the £ (25.15 to the dollar) in 1925; in August, 1926, it touched 148.32 to the £ (30.53 to the dollar). It has since then improved, following upon a deflation policy steadily pursued, and at time of writing (May 1927) was about 88 to the £ (18 to the dollar.) Bankers in Rome whom I asked expressed the opinion that the Government would probably stabilise at a figure somewhere about 90 to the £, and restore the gold standard at that figure. That can only be an opinion. There is no secret which will be more closely guarded than the actual intention of the Government in this respect until the time comes to announce a decision.

The effect of stabilising at a figure above 25 would be, of course, to confiscate a certain propor-

tion of the old internal debt. If the figure were 100 those who had loaned 100 lira gold before 1915 would find that their bonds were worth only 25 lira gold. On the other hand, the effect of seeking to restore the lira to the 25 figure would be to subsidise greatly those people who had loaned to the Government during the period of inflation. If they had loaned with the lira at 100 they would, with a full revalorisation, find their bonds multiplied in value four times.

Apart from the position of bondholders, the question of deflation and inflation vitally affects industry. Whilst inflation is going on it acts as a bonus on all export trades. The manufacturer is paying wages, etc., on the basis of the inflated currency, and receiving payment for the goods he sends abroad on a gold basis. Deflation reverses the position. The manufacturer who has calculated on getting, say, 100 local lira for the article he sells gets only, say, 85. Italian industry in the export trades has suffered from the increasing gold value of the lira (from 144 to the £ to 88 in the £). If the gold value of the lira is further increased his difficulties will grow.

The question of the degree of revalorisation of the lira is thus one of a balance of expediencies. Full revalorisation (the policy followed by Great Britain with the £) would hugely increase the burden of the internal debt, would put vast profits in the pockets of those who subscribed to loans during the inflation period or who bought lira bills during that period, and would impose a grave crisis on all exporting industries. There would be, of course, some compensating advantages; but it hardly seems to be a possible policy, and I think the opinion of those bankers who look for stabilisation at something near to the present figure is sound. To cite the experience of another country, Finland, which revalorised its mark at 193 to the £—this caused no marked discontent and in the opinion of the Governor of the Bank of Finland, as stated to me, gave a general average of justice to all the interests affected. There were some losses, of course, as there would be if Italy stabilised at a figure near to 90 in the £, but, once a currency has been inflated, the return back to stable conditions must involve losses in some quarters whatever the policy pursued—either losses to

lenders who granted loans at the old rate, or losses to the Government by the grant of a bonus to those who granted loans at the depreciated rate.

The industrial consequences to Italy of the policy of deflation so far pursued have been met with courage and wisdom, and the completely centralised authority of government has been of the greatest value in mitigating losses and in providing that the losses should be shared as equally as possible by those concerned. The first effect of deflation was that export manufacturers had to accept less Italian money for their goods; they sold at the same gold value, but that gold value was worth less in lira. An effective appeal was made to them to avoid creating unemployment by closing down works which were not immediately profitable. They responded patriotically. There was remarkably little growth of unemployment, far less than that which followed the much smaller degree of deflation carried out in Great Britain. (The fact that during this period Italian Savings Bank deposits increased 50 per cent, indicates that there was no result of wide-spread poverty).

Some relief should have come to industry by a fall in internal prices, which would have the effect firstly of stimulating local demand—people having to pay less per unit of goods purchased would be able to purchase more units; and secondly of allowing a decrease in *nominal* wages which would not be a decrease in *real* wages—the worker would get a less number of lira but would be able to purchase with that less number as much goods as before. In the opinion of the Government this fall in internal prices did not come quickly enough or fully enough. Wholesale prices fell, but retailers were inclined to sell at the old rates and put the extra profits in their pockets. A vigorous campaign, on Fascist lines, to reduce the cost of living was started. Every Prefect, every Podesta, every Fascist organisation co-operated, and the Syndics of retail tradesmen had it brought home to them that they must co-operate patriotically in the national effort to deflate without imposing on consumers too harsh losses. Good results were quickly achieved. Retail prices of various essential commodities fell from 5 per cent. in some cases to as much as 30 per cent. in other cases.

The next step was to enforce a reduction of nominal wages. This was fixed at about 6 per cent., and the reduction (made in May, 1927) seems to have been accepted loyally.

All this involved some hardship, to workers some little loss of *real* wages: to manufacturers and distributors some loss of profits. But the Government has sought in good faith to distribute the hardship as evenly as possible, and having unlimited power over every department of national life, has probably succeeded in its task. It is as yet a little too soon to say with certainty; the real test will come with this winter season. But with some confidence it can be forecasted that the Fascist Government is on the way to success in a great financial achievement, that of restoring 40 per cent. of the "invisible borrowings" of the War and post-War period without causing grave unemployment, and without allowing any section of the community to "profiteer" unduly at the expense of other sections during the readjustment.

Twelve months ago there were fears that the Italian currency would go the same way as the Austrian and German currencies. But Musso-

lini's bold intervention in August, 1926, with a statement of resolute policy, which has since been faithfully carried out, saved the situation, and began the remarkable improvement which has continued progressively since. Features of that policy were the *Littorio* internal loan to provide the Bank of Italy with funds for financing industry, and the compulsory consolidation of the floating debt existing in the shape of short-dated Treasury Bills. Regarding the *Littorio* loan, I heard one criticism—from a foreign resident in Italy—that “moral suasion” was pushed to an extreme degree in the campaign to secure subscriptions. Looking into the facts I found nothing which went beyond the persuasive measures which were employed in the United States during the “Liberty Loan” campaign. There was a vigorous canvas of capitalists; and the foreign resident with funds in Italy was expected to do his share. The results were satisfactory. A sum of 3,150,000,000 lira was subscribed, apart from the conversion of 20,353,000,000 lira worth of Treasury Bills and five and seven year Treasury Bonds. Three million Italians subscribed to the loan.

Commenting on the result, the Association of Italian Corporations stated: "The subscription may be considered satisfactory, in the first place because the loan was issued during a period of financial stress, evidence of which is afforded by the fact that the Consolidated 5 per cent. War Loan was quoted steadily below the issue price of the new stock; and in the second place because of the unprecedented number of subscribers belonging to all classes of the population. The loan has been a manifestation of patriotism and of the attachment of the country to the regime rather than a financial operation".

The total deflation between 1921 and 1926 is indicated by the decrease of the amount of money in circulation, *viz.*, 1,398,000,000 lira. It may be noted that this decrease is due wholly to reductions in the amount of note issues on behalf of the State; those on behalf of industry have increased, but not to such an extent as to counterbalance the reduction of the issues on behalf of the State.

The position as it stands to-day is that foreign capital has full confidence in the soundness of Italian finance and is coming in to the country

freely, both from the United States and from Great Britain; that the lira is safe at about 90 to the £ and could be stabilised at that figure without peril to national industry or national credit.

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The national Budget is the next point of interest. In this regard there is to be recorded a financial betterment since 1922 which borders on the miraculous. By rigid economy, by making efficiency of service the watchword of national administration, Fascism has turned the Treasury from a state of dangerous deficit into one of flourishing surplus. In 1922 there was a deficit of 12,649,000,000 lira; in 1923, the first year of Fascism, the deficit was reduced to 3,029,000,000; in 1924 the deficit was reduced to 418,000,000: in 1925 there was a surplus of 479,000,000 (the first since 1911); in 1926 a surplus of 2,268,000,000. Comparing 1922 and 1926 the betterment is thus 14,917,000,000 lira.

Italy has funded her foreign war debts both to the United States and to Great Britain, and has wisely decided to open a special account to deal with these payments. Money received on account of Reparations from Germany is not paid

into the general revenue, but into this special account, and from it are paid interest and amortisation of the foreign debt.

Italy's local government finances used to be marked by great prodigality in some districts. The idea that Government or municipal money comes from Heaven and not out of the pockets of the community, that it is a duty to spend it somehow, anyhow, was at least as rife as in other countries. To use municipal money on useless works, on roads leading from nowhere to anywhere, and the like, was a common practice. Fascist administration has stopped that. Local government is no longer slipshod and wasteful, but is brought into strict conformity with the national policy of economy and efficiency. One result is the willingness of foreign investors to invest in Italian municipal stocks; but the chief benefit is in the stopping up of what was a serious leakage in the nation's resources.

The national debt of Italy was in February, 1927, 84,348,000,000 lira, and the external debt 510,000,000 gold lira. Both debts have been decreased in recent years, chiefly by the reduction of floating debt.

The Bank of Italy has now exclusive privileges of note issue, and has supervision of all deposit banks so that there is complete centralisation of financial control.

Taxation is high in Italy, equal to a ratio of 38.10 per cent. of the national income (as compared with 27.30 per cent. in Great Britain and 13.30 per cent. in the United States). But some relief has been given to the Italian tax-payer under the Fascist regime by various reforms in the fiscal system. The number of taxes has been reduced, their collection made easier and more economical, the incidence of taxation extended as widely as possible and evasions prevented. Among the measures taken were the repeal of the law on the compulsory inscription of bearer bonds, the exemption from Income Tax granted to investments of foreign capital in Italy, and the repeal of death duties on inheritances within the family group, a measure intended to encourage thrift.

Fascism has abolished several other taxes, but has imposed one interesting new tax, on bachelors, the revenue from which goes to the National Welfare Work for Mothers and Children. The

rates are fixed at 35 lira a year for men between the ages of 25 and 35, 50 lira between the ages of 35 and 50, and 25 lira between the ages of 50 and 65. In addition to these fixed rates, a sum equivalent to 25 per cent. of the sur-tax on total income is added. Exemptions are granted to the clergy and all members of religious orders, to officers and men in the Defence Forces, to war invalids, to the mentally deficient and to foreigners residing permanently in Italy.

The settlements effected of the foreign war debts to the United States and Great Britain were made on terms very favourable to Italy. From the United States she secured a remission of 80 per cent. of the total, from Great Britain a remission of 85 per cent. of the total. The World War cost Italy directly about 164,000,000,000 lira and the proportion of this met by foreign war-loans, and the post-war foreign loans, has now been reduced in total by something over 80 per cent.

As a measure of financial reform the Italian Government is taking steps to encourage the system of payment by cheque common to English speaking countries.

Italy, it may be noted in concluding this chapter, controls the National Bank of Albania, which has its Head Office in Rome, and through it the financial system of that country. The Bank has the exclusive privilege of issuing bank notes in Albania, and gold and other specie. It transacts all ordinary banking business, acts as Treasurer to the Albanian Government, and is also authorised to promote business, agricultural, trade and transport services for the development of Albania's natural resources.

The Bank of Albania has introduced a handsome gold coinage into Albania, and is directing attention to the introduction of modern banking systems in which, as an official report naïvely states, "the first requisite has been to educate the environment in banking principles and to the need of strict punctuality in meeting liabilities on bills".

## CHAPTER XI

### ITALY'S ECONOMIC POSITION

*The adverse trade balance—How the deficit is made up—Movements for the betterment of production—The silk industry—The protective system—Unemployment in Italy—A vigorous public works programme—The new Copyright law.*

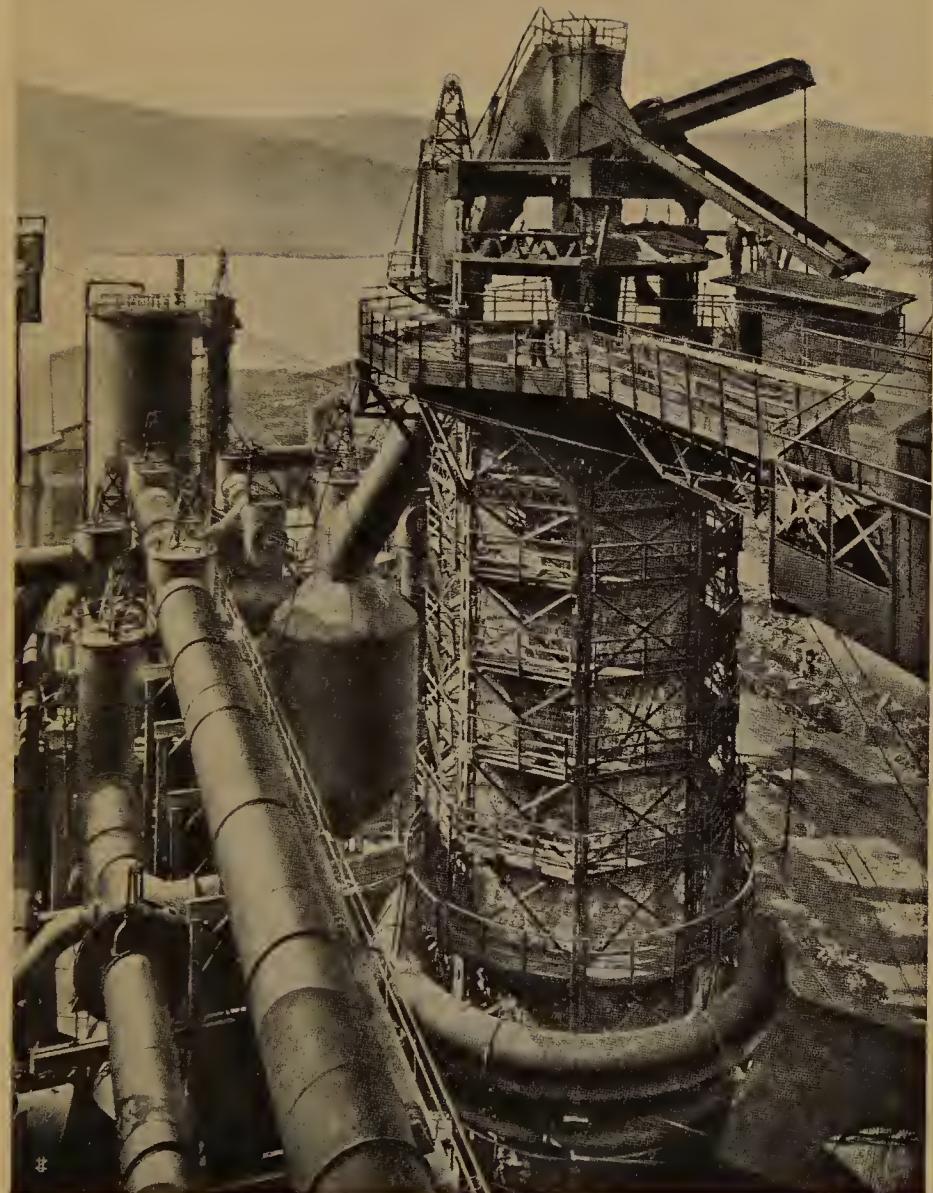
THE unfavourable balance of trade, taking into consideration only visible imports and exports, is a feature of Italy's economic position. That unfavourable balance has always existed; it is one of the objects of Fascism, as I have pointed out in commenting on the "Wheat War", to reduce and ultimately to abolish it. The excess of visible imports over exports in 1924 represented a value of about £50,000,000, in 1925 a value of about £80,000,000, in 1926 a value of about £72,000,000. There is

only one group of products on which Italy shows a favourable trade balance, and that is textile goods—silk, artificial silk and cotton. In all others she is an importer more than an exporter—of food supplies, minerals, oils, woods, etc.

Though there is no balance of trade, there is, of course, a balance of payment; otherwise the country would be adding to its foreign debt each year instead of decreasing it. The balance of payment is made up of invisible exports. The chief of these is through the tourist traffic, a great source of national wealth. The tourist in Italy, paying his hotel and restaurant and traffic bills, is an “invisible export” of prime importance. The second of these is from the earnings of Italian shipping. The Italian is a great shipbuilder—production in this industry coming second to that of Great Britain—and a great shipowner. Shipping statistics for January, 1927, show that the total net tonnage of Italian ships entering or quitting Italian ports was 7,256,375 (the foreign shipping net tonnage was in the same period 2,582,953). Tonnage built in 1926, was about double that of 1925. Smaller items which come into the Italian trade balance sheet as “invisible exports” are

the remittances made to Italy from migrants abroad, and remittances made to the Roman Catholic Church from abroad. The receipts coming in from investments abroad are small.

On the whole, counting visible and invisible items, Italy now pays her way in her foreign trade, and has a small credit balance each year to pay foreign debt or to accumulate as home capital. With success in the Fascist "campaigns" there is reasonable prospect of a much better position being reached. The recent decision to establish at the principal ports Free Trade areas where manufacturers can carry on without any Customs restriction on their imports, or on their exports abroad, may not show any effect on the visible trade figures, but will undoubtedly have great value in swelling invisible exports, and will assist Italy to become a greater manufacturing country and to secure a greater share of the Mediterranean *entrepot* trade. From January 1st, 1928, an authorised area in these "free" ports may be placed outside the Customs' frontiers, and there merchandise of all descriptions can be handled, warehoused and worked free from Customs limitations. With the consent of the



WHERE NAPOLEON ONCE REIGNED  
A blast furnace in Elba



Ministry of National Economy, industrial plants (such as shipbuilding yards) may be opened in the free port zones for the manufacture of goods for export. Among other advantages, this policy is likely to help Italian shipping as it will facilitate the finding of return cargoes, one of the chief difficulties for the shipping of a country whose imports greatly exceed exports in weight and bulk.

Italy's chief trade is with the United States, Germany, France, Great Britain, British India, Switzerland and the Argentine. Only with Switzerland of these countries is there a favourable trade balance. The greatest deficit is in the trade with the United States, which sends to Italy three times the value of the goods she takes from that country. With Great Britain and France the balance is about even. Imports into Italy from the United States equal the sum of the imports of the next two chief sources, France and Germany. Trade with the Italian Colonies is not very great in bulk, but most of it stays in Italian hands.

To better her economic position Italy relies chiefly on the improvement of agricultural production. The movement for the more intensive

cultivation of wheat has been already noted, and also that for the reclamation of marshy areas. In connection with this there is proceeding an interesting experiment to help ex-soldiers to economic independence. Areas in various parts of the country, totalling about 127,000 acres, have been acquired, partly by donations and partly by expropriation, at a fixed price, of lands which their owners had failed to reclaim and cultivate in accordance with the requirements of recent laws. The National Organisation for Ex-soldiers carries out the costly work of drainage and preparation, and then leases the land to ex-soldier farmers, or to co-operative associations, the majority of whose members fought in the war. The terms of the leases ensure the right of ultimate ownership to those who improve the land up to a certain given standard. Up to the present, 54,000 acres have thus been leased or sold and the total number of war veterans placed is about 20,000. Reclamation works are being carried out at Coltano in Tuscany, at Sanluri in Sardinia, at Sorano in the Province of Taranto, at the mouth of the Tiber and in the Upper Adige.

To the betterment of the natural silk industry special attention is being given. A National Institute has been formed to encourage the cultivation of the mulberry, to protect silk-worm breeding stations from infection, to enlarge and improve the technical equipment of the reeling mills, to encourage and assist the silk-weaving industry. Its four sections will deal respectively with silk-growing, with the economic and technical side of the silk manufacturing industries, with the technical and scientific developments of the trade, and with the statistics of production and trade in silk.

The Silk Institute will have, even at this late date, to combat some superstitions which have a great influence still on the national life of Italy. Silkworms, to some Italian farmers, do not call for any scientific culture ; but it is strictly necessary that anyone entering a house where silkworms are should invoke a blessing: "*Il Signore ve lo benedica*"; and the eggs of the silkworms must be taken to Church on Palm Sunday to hear the "Passion" read. The women carry the eggs in their pockets and they are not blessed openly. But if not taken to church on that day they

produce either bad caterpillars or silk of inferior quality. (Just as new wine must be tasted on St. Martin's Eve or else next year's grapes will not yield good wine). When British troops were co-operating with the Italians during the World War some of them took advantage of the opportunity to learn a little of this very interesting industry. It was a discovery to most that the silkworm does not live an open-air life out on the mulberry tree, but is carefully housed in the farmer's best room and has its food brought to it from the trees.

The silk industry is one of the most important of Italy, earning about £50,000,000 a year. Not all of this value, however, represents home-grown silk. Some raw silk is imported from China and Japan and France to be made up by the Italian people. Despite the competition of artificial silk, natural silk has an inexhaustible world demand, and if Italy can regain her old world position as its chief producer (she is now third on the list) there is no fear of encountering over-stocked markets.

The mention of artificial silk introduces the subject of Italian manufacturing industries, of which this is one of the chief. Italy has a share

in the pioneering credit (or otherwise) of a form of enterprise which, by providing cheap silk-looking stockings, has encouraged the women of the civilised world to show their shins to the public gaze. If industrial chemists had not set themselves the problem of imitating in vats the digestive processes of the silkworm, which eats leaves and makes silk of them, the almost universal cheap, shiny stocking would be impossible, and probably there would be no fashion for short skirts. Whether artificial silk is a blessing or otherwise, it is a fact, and Italy makes good money out of it, increasingly good money. The Italian artificial silk industry, I understand, is linked up in a cartel with the chief producers of this commodity in the United States and Great Britain. A valuable market for its yield is being opened up in India and other Asiatic countries. The chief customer used to be Great Britain, taking more than one-third of the total exports. Partly because of the imposition of a protective duty in Great Britain, partly, perhaps, because of the operations of the cartel, artificial silk exports to that country have now fallen to about one-sixth of the 1925 figure. But the demands of other customers

grow; in 1926 the weight of artificial silk exported from Italy, was double that of 1924, and the figures for the first part of 1927 indicate that exports this year will double those of 1926.

Cotton textiles, wool textiles, automobiles, glassware, are other great Italian manufacturing industries—all dependent largely on imported raw material and flourishing in Italy because of superior economy in the organisation and utilisation of labour. The settled state of industrial peace in Italy gives to these enterprises an asset of great value. The factory can base its plans on certainty of production, and on the confidence that if unexpected difficulties have to be met, the loss from those difficulties will be amicably shared between Capital and Labour. To quote Mussolini: "We make trial of the gigantic experiment of a great national State industrially organised on lines fundamentally different from those in force elsewhere. I am confident that the experiment will be successful".

A surplus of production in many lines has followed the policy of deflation restricting foreign



Nove Station. 96,000 h.p.



Fadalto Station. 132,000 h.p.

THE GREAT PIAVE SANTA CROCE HYDRO-ELECTRIC WORK



markets, and the manufacturers' response to appeals to keep their works going rather than add to the number of unemployed. Many manufacturers have been making for "stock", and find their stocks hard to realise. To meet this an effort was made to introduce the American system of selling goods on "time-payment" methods, but this was not very successful since it was not suited to the habits of the people. The "time-payment" motor-car is not a feature of Italian life to-day.

Italy seeks to preserve her home markets for her home producers by a stringent system of Protective tariffs; but appeals also to national sentiment to "buy Italian" (on the same lines as the "buy British" propaganda in Great Britain). The hoardings, the railway carriages, the places of business, carry posters recommending a policy of sentimental preference to home goods.

The cost of living in Italy is falling. The general index, taking the 1920 figure at 100, was 117 in 1926, 105 in January, 1927. Or, taking the 1913 figure at 100, the cost was 739 in 1926, and 660 in January, 1927. These later figures

have to be considered in the light of the fact that the lira had in January, 1927, about four times the nominal value of the lira in 1913. At a fair estimate, the cost of living in 1927, as compared with pre-war rates, shows a true increase of about 50 %. This is partly due to improved conditions of living, partly to the general increase in the world prices of commodities.

Unemployment in Italy was very serious in the post-war period. Conditions have improved since as shown in the report, published May, 1927, of the Ministry of National Economy. In 1926 returns were made for 22,436 concerns, employing 1,834,411 workers, showing a 2% increase over the number employed by them in 1925. The 1927 returns show a tendency for unemployment to increase owing to the deflation policy of the Government, but a fair impression of the improvement since 1921 will be gained from quoting the December figures each year—unemployment is subject to severe monthly fluctuations in Italy—at the end of December, 1921, the unemployed totalled 541,000; December, 1922, 381,000; December, 1923, 258,000; December, 1924, 150,000; December, 1925, 122,000; December, 1926,

181,000. The fall from 541,000 to 181,000 represents the benefit of industrial reorganisation, and some of the set-back due to deflation. Not until December, 1927 figures are available will there be statistical evidence of the full effects on employment of the deflation policy.

The migration statistics are of importance in relation to the question of Italian unemployment. There has always been a considerable outflow of Italians from their home land. In 1876, the first year for which there are definite figures, the number of emigrants was 108,000. The peak was reached in 1913, with a total migration of 872,000. In the after-war years the figure of nearly 500,000 was reached in 1920, and then the numbers dwindled sharply. The excesses of departures over returns since then have been: 1921, 77,000: 1922, 170,000: 1923, 284,000: 1924, 233,000: 1925, 130,000: 1926, 113,000. Migration to the United States has fallen off greatly from the pre-war rate, to Australia, Canada and South America it has increased. Migration to France in 1926, equalled the total of all migration to countries beyond Europe.

Italy to-day is pursuing a vigorous public works programme, especially in the South, to provide for roads, railways, aqueducts, drainage systems, electrical power, harbours, school buildings and land reclamation schemes, thus developing a potentially rich section of the country, which had fallen behind the rest of Italy. Present work in hand represents a total value of 5,000,000,000 lira and the annual expenditure on developmental public works has risen from an average of 900,000,000 lira before 1922 to 1,500,000,000 lira in 1926.

In one particular there is a special call for public works; at present good drinking water in sufficient supply is available to only one half of the total population of Italy. A vigorous effort is being made to put that right in the interests of public health and of temperance.

An effort is being made to develop to a greater extent the fisheries on the Italian coasts and in the Mediterranean. The west coasts of Italy are not rich in fish; the Adriatic coasts give better yields. But a proportion of the national consumption of fish, both fresh and preserved, still

comes from foreign sources—the Northern industrial towns take large consignments from the Belgian coasts. Recognising that the supply from the Italian coasts must be supplemented if the nation is to be made self-supporting in this respect, a service of steam trawlers, with refrigerating plant, has been organised to bring fish from the African coasts. A new industry which promises well is the curing of sardines.

Forestry is not being neglected, and part of the work of the Voluntary Militia is to do honorary work to safeguard forests from fires and from careless damage.

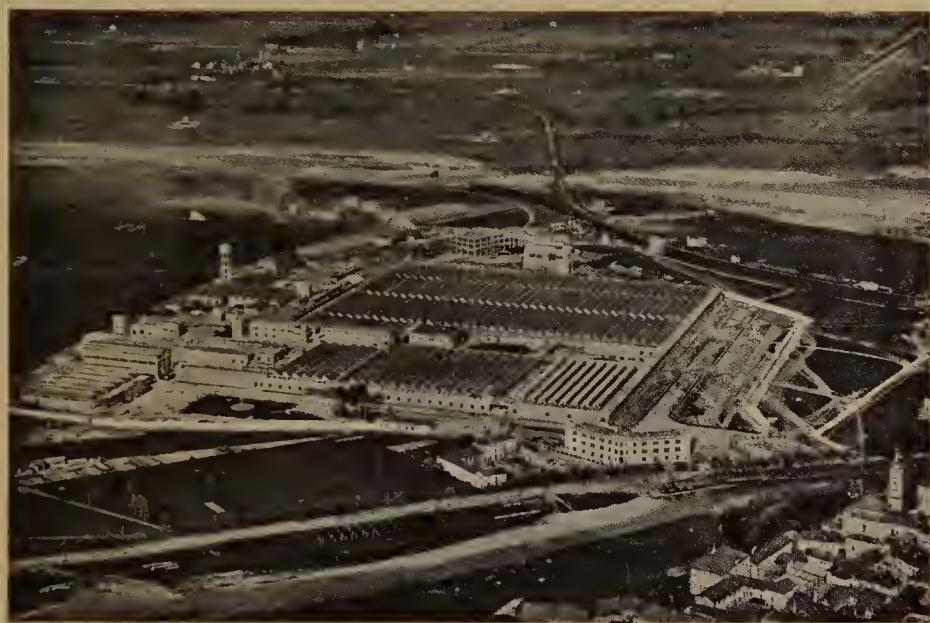
Italy, it may be mentioned in this chapter, has, by a Copyright Act of 1925, given full protection to all intellectual work. The protection covers not only literary and artistic works and musical scores, but also ballet and pantomimic works, graphic and plastic representations, cinematographic and photographic works, works of applied art and engineering projects when they afford original solutions of technical problems. The Act forbids the publication of volumes containing extracts without the author's consent. For purposes of copyright, broadcasting is treated as a

public performance. The interests of authors are, in certain cases, subordinated by the Act to the interests of the nation. Thus unrestricted reproduction of portraits of educational value, or which refer to events of public interest, is allowed; and if the author of a scientific work fails to provide for, or authorise, a translation within a period of ten years, it may be translated freely.

This provision of better protection for the writer may be taken as some kind of a make-weight for the losses which the Fascist censorship of the Press has caused to his craft. Italian newspapers have had a serious set-back since they have been prevented from discussing political issues with the old freedom. Friends of the regime express confidence that in the near future newspapers will be restored to their old prosperity as readers learn to appreciate that political criticism is not the most essential element of interest. It is difficult to share their confidence.

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To sum up: Italy has made great industrial and economic progress during the first five years



TWO ARTIFICIAL SILK FACTORIES OF THE SUIA-VISCOSA CO.



of the Fascist Government: at present there is a check to that progress owing to the deflation policy; but when the effects of that have passed Italy should enter upon an era of great prosperity.

## CHAPTER XII

### FASCISM IN RELATION TO RELIGION AND MORALS

*Relations with the Vatican—The educational system—Concessions to Church schools—The dignity of labour inculcated—The public morality policy—Campaign against neo-Malthusianism—Fascism and the cinema—The “maison tolerée”.*

THE relations between the Papacy and Italian Fascism are a matter of some perplexity. I found people who took the view that the Vatican now in a measure dominates the Palace Chigi and dictates to the Dictator his hostile measures against Birth Control, against Secret Societies, his encouragement of Church Schools and his introduction to secular schools of religious education. I found other people who took the view that Mussolini is still “anti-clerical” and that if he makes any con-

cessions to the Pope they are dictated by expediency.

One thing is certain: the outward relations between Church and State are cordial and mutually laudatory. My own impression is that Mussolini's attitude to the Vatican is that of Napoleon's Concordat. He puts the State's interests first, and would not sacrifice anything he regarded as of national interest for the sake of the Church; but he estimates that the help of the Church is necessary for the firm government of any State, and that to Italy the prestige of the Papacy is specially valuable. My impression of the Vatican's attitude is that the ambition of restoring the "Temporal Power" is fading away with the passage of time, and that there is a possibility of its being abandoned, in form as it has been in substance. That Fascist Italy would consent to the revival of the "Temporal Power" of the Popes is unthinkable, and if the Vatician and the Palace Chigi are to come to a complete understanding—and there are many signs of this development—it must be on the basis of a United Italy.

. . . . .

Under Fascism the educational system of Italy has been entirely remodelled. The idea of secular education has been abandoned. Steps have been taken to put Church schools in a better position to compete with State schools. Most important the tendency of education has been diverted from the aim of making clerks, with a contempt for manual work, to that of making mechanics with a pride in craftsmanship. Its purpose is defined as being "religious, intellectual, æsthetic and practical".

In Italy before 1922 the educational system was designed to favour the State school, which was secular, at the expense of the private school, which was usually Roman Catholic. Attendance at a State school was proof of proficiency, and the pupils could dispense with a "passing-out" examination; pupils at private schools had not this privilege. In consequence parents were tempted to send their children to the State schools as offering more certain material advantages. Fascism has abolished that differentiation. In consequence the private schools have gained a great increase in prestige, and in the number of their pupils.

In the private schools, almost wholly Roman Catholic, that faith is taught dogmatically. In the State schools religion is taught but not dogmatically and in a form which aims—whether it succeeds or not I cannot speak with certainty—to be acceptable to those who are not Roman Catholics. The population is, of course, predominantly Roman Catholic; the minor religious communities are the Hebrews and a small number of Protestant Waldenses. The syllabus of religious education in the State schools was not drawn up by Roman Catholic theologians solely, but by them in conjunction with laymen professors. It is not dogmatic; it is Christian; but strives to be Christian without being hostile to Judaism. Perhaps it succeeds. I cannot pretend to say with certainty. The only fact that I have to guide me in the matter is that there was recently a Jewish request for special provision for Jewish children; and I am informed that it was not generally supported by the Jewish community.

It probably would not be wrong to conclude that the private schools, which are treated on full terms of equality with the State schools,

teach the Roman Catholic dogma, and that the State schools teach religion in a form generally sympathetic with that dogma.

The old system in Italy followed faithfully the world-wide folly of regarding the teaching of reading and writing as the chief aims of education. Of that folly the British people, with an uncharacteristic lack of common-sense, have been specially guilty. Children have had inflicted on them a smattering of what they knew as “genteel” accomplishment, which gave them an ambition to become “white-collar” workers, and hindered rather than helped them to become useful citizens. Even in Egypt, whilst British honesty of purpose and practical capacity were transforming a bankrupt and semi-barbarous Turkish province to a prosperous country, British “education” was transforming the children of the fellahs into useless aspirants for clerical posts.

The new system in Italy definitely teaches the dignity of useful work. A lady in Rome told me of one of the results which came under her notice of a boy who firmly refused a “white-collar” “blind alley” post, because he wanted to do some-

VISIBLE

DETAINED



SOME LITTLE ITALIAN SUBJECTS, MOGADISCIO



thing real. It sets out to train farmers who will love their fields, mechanics who will appreciate the joy of making things faithfully, labourers who will have a real pride in their work. The boy or girl of exceptional ability will not be thwarted, but the average child—and most children are average—will go from school without a discontented aspiration to become a clerk or an actress.

Mussolini, the son of a school-mistress himself, and for two years a school-master, has given a special fostering care to the new educational system, but in methods seems to have trusted largely to the guidance of that great educational reformer, Gentile, who was the first Fascist Minister for Education and, in his present positions as President of the Superior Council of Education and as head of the Teachers' Training College, has a powerful influence in educational development. The "policy" of education is Mussolini's, the methods largely those of Gentile.

Supplementary to the school training, the young folk of Italy come under the influence of the Junior Fascist organisations: in the case of the

boys, the "Ballila" (already mentioned) and later of the "Vanguard"; in the case of the girls, of the "Piccole Italiane" and later of the "Giovane Italiane". These organisations of girls inculcate lessons of orderliness, cleanliness, neatness, and of woman's true destiny being that of wife and mother.

The rising generation in Italy are thus being trained to accept Fascist ideals as the established and the only natural order of things, as deliberately as were the Spartan young trained in Spartan ideals, or as the Bolshevik young in Russia are trained to be anti-Christian. "Every little boy or girl that is born alive" will not be "Liberal or Conservative" but Fascist. Clearly Mussolini confides in this to make the Fascist regime permanent and looks forward to the future Italy as being surely Fascist because it will know no other political faith.

Will children thus trained, taught that Man is on Earth as God's agent, and that his duty to God is best expressed by faithful duty to his nation, grow up with a cheerful acceptance of that faith, or with a latent instinct of revolt

against these precepts of piety? Time alone can answer that question.

• . . . .

Fascism has a definite public morality policy which is explained officially thus:

“Be strong to be pure; be pure to be strong.”

This aphorism of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus inspires the ceaseless activity of the Fascist Government in resolute intervention to assure, against everybody and everything, the physical and moral integrity of the Italian people. Italy of to-morrow must be strong to be pure; she will find in the purity of her children and in the health of her mothers the secret of her force. Fascism intends to remove from the list of traditional rights the *liberty to be weak*. Weakness is a crime not only against oneself but against one's country.

The most challenging of Fascism's moral activities is that directed towards the suppression of contraceptive practices. It accepts fully the view, of which the Roman Catholic Church is the most conspicuous champion, that it is wrong to use any means designed to prevent marital relations being fruitful. Advocacy of what is known as neo-Malthusianism is punished.

One cannot say with certainty whether the motive of this is really ethical, or whether it is wholly, or in part, political—*i.e.*, designed to promote the growth of the population, in the spirit of Napoleon's snub to the woman with an exalted sense of self-importance: "The greatest woman in France is she who bears most soldiers for the Army". It is not a subject easy to probe. Some minds would exclude the possibility of an ethical motive, maintaining that the Roman Catholic attitude—which probably was, until recently, the general attitude of Christianity—was founded not so much on an interpretation of the Divine Will as on the necessity of making some compromise with the African sects which held as sinful all marital relations. To these minds, the opposition to "birth control" of Fascism in Italy can be explained only by two theories: one the desire for more Italian population; the other the desire to please the Papacy. Other minds will welcome the Fascist policy in this respect as clear evidence of a lofty moral outlook.

The authoritative explanation which I was given seems to admit mixed motives. I quote salient passages:

Not only must the Government repress everything which can injure the moral standards of the people, but it must prevent the creation of a hedonistic state of mind which would be the antithesis of the Fascist spirit of constant sacrificial submission of individual and contingent interests to the superior interests of the nation.

These superior interests, in the problem of the birth-rate as well as in all other problems, coincide with the faultless reasoning of Catholic morality.

The great wealth of the nation is the vigorous florescence of the Italian family which now recognises that in the multiplication of its sons lies the strongest instrument for Italy's uncheckable world expansion. In fact, it is significant that the provinces in which birth control has made any marked progress at all are those in which temporary emigration to foreign nations is most intense, and hence those which are most exposed to the influence of foreign customs. . . .

The Government's campaign against birth control is flanked by one against criminal abortions. Since, however, an economic factor enters into both these practices, merely repressive measures against them are useless unless they are accompanied, especially among the poorer classes, by provisions to lessen the economic burden of large families.

The Government's campaign against birth control has received the enthusiastic approval of the Holy See.

This fact demonstrates the political importance of a matter which superficially seems based upon morality alone. . . .

Let us not be worried too much about the economic embarrassment which would follow an exceptional intensification of the birth rate of Italy. Fecundity is not incompatible with prosperity, . . . Peoples can die of exhaustion, but not through richness of men; through sterility, not fecundity: and the most formidable of all raw materials is man power, since it alone can assure to a nation the road to power and to the conquest of the future.

On the question of the abuse of alcoholic liquors, Fascism carries on an active campaign against drunkenness, but is not Prohibitionist, except in the minor detail that spirits may not be sold on Sunday—the usual rest day—though wines and beers may.

Organised campaigns against blasphemy and against immodesty in feminine dress are other indications of the spirit of Fascist Italy. The prohibition of gambling casinos is more political than ethical. Italy does not consider gambling immoral, and provides by its State lotteries ample outlet for the gambler. The prohibition of

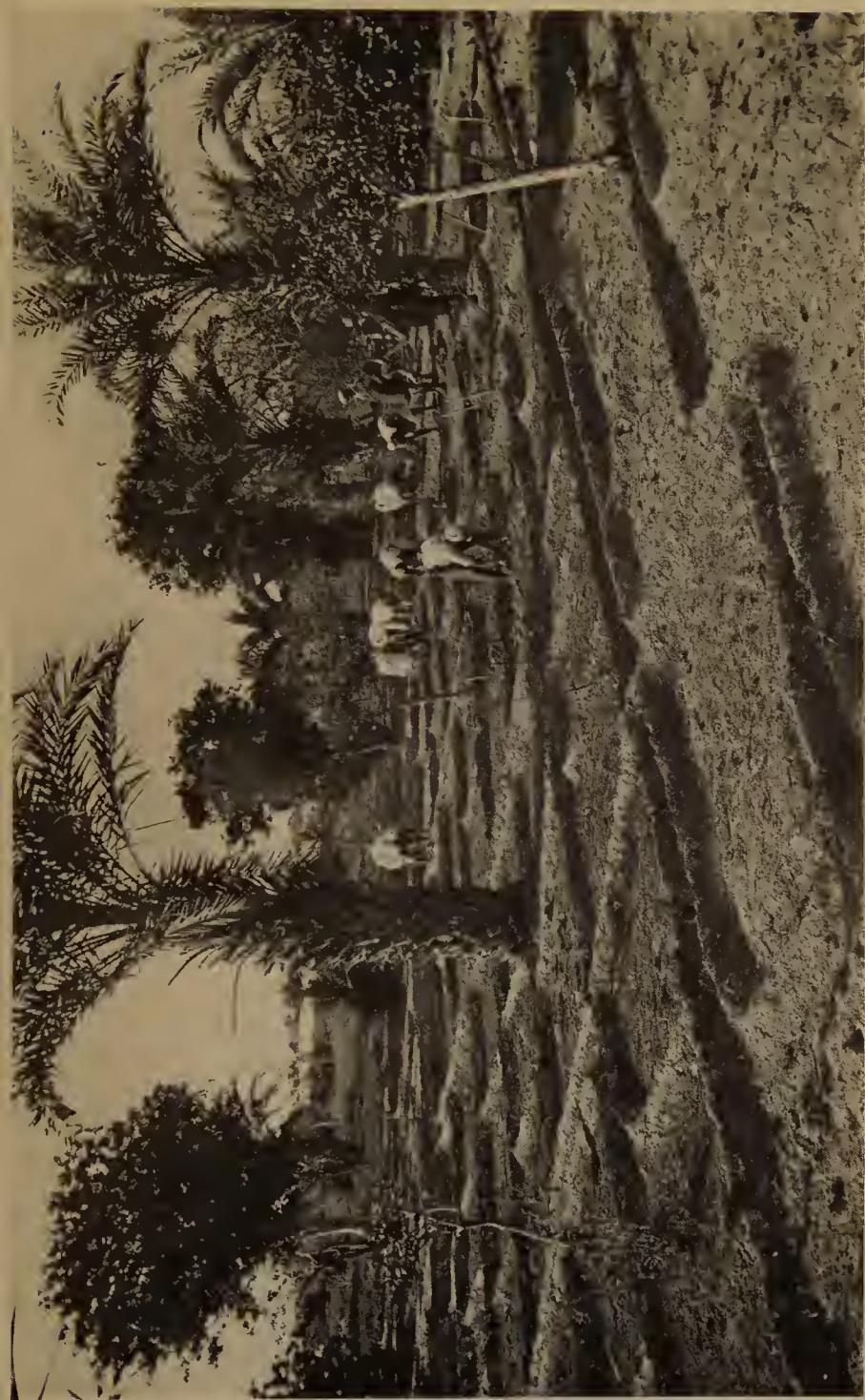
roulette, it may be accepted, therefore, is dictated by the wish to avoid competition with State enterprise.

Fascism has looked upon the cinema with a critical eye, and found it a possible source of corruption. There is accordingly a more rigid censorship of films than in any other country I know. This censorship is largely entrusted to the mothers of the community. I reject the explanation that this is intended to conciliate American objection to a drastic interference with the great export trade of the United States, (one of the few firmly-rooted traditions of America is mother-worship, and what is done by mothers has an established claim to respect). It is merely Fascism proving again its knowledge of human nature: the mother is instinctively Puritan. Films with any hint of lewdness are forbidden to all; to children is denied, in addition, sight of films which have a *motif* of passion or of crime. Students of an earlier period of the cinema theatre may remember that the Italian-produced film seemed to seize every available opportunity to show a handsome woman getting into her bath. That sort of production would be impossible now.

On the other hand there is a plentiful supply of films with a moral or pious motive. Two films asking for public attention on my last visit to Rome dealt with the life of St. Francis and with *Fabiola*, that old-fashioned story of early Christian life in Rome. It is not the case that romantic films are forbidden; but they must conform to a higher standard of prudishness than London or New York exacts.

Cabaret shows of the type common to most cities—the type which is “more navel than millinery”, as the late Mr. Beerbohm Tree said in criticism of the claim that *Chu Chin Chow* was essentially a patriotic play—are prohibited. Pornographic books, newspapers and pictures are under a ban. The standard of propriety exacted is by no means an excessively prudish one; it is not “Comstockian” to use a word which the United States has given to the English language; but anything which obviously seeks to attract by lewdness alone is banned. Fascism is indeed “the regime of virtue” as *La Vie Parisienne*, which can be accepted as an authority on these matters, rather plaintively remarked the other day.

ITALY'S COLONIES  
Cultivating an Oasis





For the children of the race there are many special safeguards. They may not be employed under the age of 15 in any places of public entertainment, except theatres devoted solely to opera and legitimate drama: nor may they be employed in the preparation of films. They must not, before reaching 15, be provided with wine or tobacco.

Perhaps it will seem to some illogical that with all these stringent regulations on questions of morals, Italian Fascism does not exactly ban what the French know as the *maison tolerée*, and which in plain English is the licensed house of prostitution. Note its explanation:

By a recent law, the Government is empowered to amend the police laws. Studies of suggestions for possible improvement of these laws are already far advanced. Two opposing theories have been offered about prostitution.

One group affirms that the State should abolish houses of prostitution. The other, while recognising the necessity of State intervention, maintains it should be directed towards controlling those houses.

Both theories have appeared unacceptable to the Government. The first, abolitionism, it is felt, would

open the doors to greater corruption and turpitude since prostitution would manifest itself, clandestinely, beyond control and hence constitute a physical and moral danger to the population. The second theory cannot be considered because prostitution can in no way be given juridical recognition.

The Government believes a middle road between the two should be taken. Regulations now controlling prostitution will be carefully revised in the sense of furnishing the police authorities with more efficient means of vigilance and control. Thus the evil—if it cannot be extirpated—can at least be contained within the narrowest possible limits.

This comes fairly close to the usual method of Anglo-Saxon communities, which is not to recognise but to connive at such places; but with the difference that it provides for some official police control, and therefore some official tolerance.

. . . . .

To recapitulate: Fascism gives to the Roman Catholic Church in Italy a degree of State support materially exceeding that given to the Established Church in England; makes

religion, though not expressly dogmatic religion, the foundation of its educational system; enforces a degree of supervision on moral issues stricter than that of other European countries.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE ITALIAN COLONIES

*Italy a late-comer in the Colonial field—The resources of the Italian Colonies—The system of administration—Can North Africa be regenerated?—Venice's example in national organisation.*

“**T**HE Italian Colonies—not the Italian Empire—one should say,” I was told at the Colonial Ministry by way of mild rebuke (I had used the term “Empire” after reading one of the more impetuous Fascist papers, which cannot allow a Roman relic to be unearthed anywhere in the world without drawing from the fact an argument for Italian expansion). Official Italy does not choose to suppress such excesses of national egoism, but does not encourage them.

Italy as a modern nation came into existence too late to share in the great requisitions on the

backward territories of the earth by the more civilised Powers. The people whose sailors had discovered Newfoundland (with British backing) and America (with Spanish backing), and whose forefathers had governed much of Asia and Africa were not able to peg out any very considerable colonial claims in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As I have suggested in a previous chapter, they are not content with their share, but are resigned to waiting for an opportunity to increase it by peaceful means.

But, as they stand, the overseas possessions of Italy are not contemptible, and with the provision of good supplies of capital are capable of great development. To detail them in brief summary:

TRIPOLI, area about 450,000 square miles, between Cyrenica and the French colony of Tunis, was a flourishing province in ancient Roman days but has been largely over-run since by the desert. The climate ranges from that of southern Italy on the coast, moist and warm, to tropical and arid in the interior. The population is about 600,000, of whom about 20,000 are Italians. The chief towns are Tripoli (population 60,000),

Misrata and Homs, all on the coast. Several railways run from Tripoli to the interior, the longest about 100 miles in length, and there are good roads for motor traffic connecting the chief coastal ports and penetrating into the interior about 300 miles. The chief exports are dates, fish, sponges, hides, salt, olive oil, wool, tobacco, henna and esparto grass.

CYRENICA, area about 350,000 square miles, between Tripoli and Egypt, is of the same general character and degree of development as Tripoli. The population is about 225,000, of whom about 10,000 are Italians. The chief town is Benghazi.

ERYTHRIA, area about 64,000 square miles, is on the Red Sea, between the Sudan and Abyssinia, has on the coast a tropical climate, on the inland plateau a milder climate with cool nights. The population is about 400,000, of whom about 5,000 are Italians. The chief towns are Asmara and Massowah. Railway and road developments are fairly good in this, the oldest of the Italian colonies. The chief exports are salt, potash, grain, hides, gum, oil seeds, pearls, cotton and coffee. There is an extensive *entrepot* trade.

ITALIAN SOMALILAND, area about 193,000 square miles, on the Indian Ocean between British Somaliland, Kenya and Abyssinia, is a colony with great agricultural possibilities for sub-tropical crops. The population is about 450,000, chiefly nomadic Somali: there are about 1,000 Italians. The chief towns are Magadoxo and Brava. The chief exports are hides, cotton, ivory, gum, amber and native fabrics.

JUBALAND (acquired by Italy under an arrangement with Great Britain in 1924), area about 47,000 square miles, on the Indian Ocean bordering on Kenya, is of the same general character as Italian Somaliland. The population is about 100,000.

Taking Italian colonial possessions in the sum, they give good opportunities for the development of the culture of cotton, sugar-cane, tobacco maize and other grains, and oil seeds and for the gathering of salt. It is the policy of Fascist Italy to push on with that development as quickly as capital available will permit, and to make colonial progress "one of the chief miracles of the regime", to quote from the statement of the Minister for the Colonies in 1927.

Before 1922 the profound moral depression in the Motherland naturally affected the administration of the colonies. The task of soldiers and civil servants then called for the highest degree of courage and resolution to keep in check the aggressive tribes of the desert, and to devote steady attention to the development of trade and production; but weakness and vacillation at home always produce depression and discouragement abroad. Now a new spirit rules alike the soldier and civil administrator. By a series of minor operations, disorderly elements have been checked and "the Roman peace imposed", to use the term of an officer of the Colonial Service. Following peace, the work of industrial development has been taken in hand with energy.

The Italian colonial system is generally similar to the Crown Colony system of the British Empire. The colonies have their own Customs tariffs: imports from the Motherland pay Customs duties, but enjoy a preference over imports from foreign countries. As yet they are financially a burden, not a benefit, to Italy. The Budget for 1921-22 devoted over 282,000,000 lira to the colonies, that of 1922-23, 267,000,000 lira, that of 1923-24,



ST. MARK'S SQUARE, VENICE



426,000,000 lira, that of 1924-25, 431,000,000 lira. The chief expenditure is, naturally, for military and naval purposes, and it was swollen during 1924 and 1925 by the necessity of several punitive expeditions. No colony shows a favourable trade balance. Tripoli's exports are about one-fifth the value of her imports, Cyrenica's even less. Erythria does better with exports (more than half the value of her imports), and Somaliland comes nearer to the level of Erythria. Imports and exports are mainly from and to Italy.

It is hardly possible to envisage in the near future such a development of the Italian Colonies as would make them commercially profitable to their Motherland. The present profit realised on colonial trade can hardly exceed ten per cent. of the expenditure under the colonial budget. There is no sign of any intention to make them more profitable by exploitation of the native inhabitants. Indeed, the tendency of Fascist administration is in the other direction. The growth of manufacturing industries in the colonies—textiles, tobacco, fish and meat preservation, etc.—is being encouraged and a systematic effort is being made to train the indigenous inhabitants to habits of

industry. This colonial industrial development is good for the natives but it can hardly be of benefit to Italian manufacturers, unless a very long view is taken. Further proofs of policy being dictated by the desire to better the condition of the natives and not to exploit them are provided by the generous provision for educational work and public health work.

Thus the colonies bring in to Italy a reward of national pride in taking up some share of "the White Man's Burden", but nothing in the way of material gain, nor of immediate prospect of material gain. They cannot be considered of much *present* value as outlets for the surplus population of Italy since their Italian citizens—exclusive of soldiers—do not total 30,000 souls.

Why then the evident willingness to add to what is, in the financial sense, a burden? Partly a motive of prestige. To have colonies is the sign of being a "Power"; to develop them unselfishly is the sign of being a Power with high ideals. Partly, also, "the long view". Fascist Italy has in mind the possibility of restoring her portion of North Africa to the flourishing prosperity it enjoyed in the days of the Roman

Empire, before the wave of Islam swept over it and first brought the incoherence of the spirit of the desert in policy, and then allowed the invasion of the sands of the desert. As Lisle Marsh Phillipps points out in *The Works of Man*:

As a destructive agent the Arab was without a peer. That terrific energy of his, so furiously rapid in its progress, so irresistible in its attack, so blasting in its effects, is comparable only to the light and glancing motions of tongues of flame. But yet, on the other hand, if the Arab energy is like fire swift and irresistible, it is, like fire, fickle. In all affairs of whatever kind in which the Arab has been concerned, fickleness equally with energy plays its part. One is constantly reminded, in dealing with him, or noting his behaviour in history, of the lack in him of that faculty of solid reason which lends such unmistakable coherence and continuity to the designs of the Western nations. In manners and customs, in likes and dislikes, in all he does and leaves undone, in his very mien and gait, in the glance of his eye and the tone of his voice, the fact that the Arab is governed by passion rather than by reason is unmistakably revealed. . . .

His whole civilisation may be taken as a further illustration of it. If that civilisation rose and expanded with the rapidity of all Arab designs, its abrupt and entire disappearance was not less characteristic. Has the reader ever passed by the scene of an overnight's display of fire-works and noted the few relics—a rocket-

stick or two, the core of a catherine-wheel, a burnt-out cracker—which are all that remains of so brief a glory? Such was the legacy, as such had been the brilliance, of the display given by the Arabs.

In the restoration of classical monuments in North Africa—a work to which Italy is giving as reverent care as to the same task in the Mother-land—there is clear evidence of the great and prospering civilisation which once reigned there. Can that be brought back to its old magnificence? Italy dreams that it can, and there is no reason in Nature why the vision should not be made a reality. Sunshine is ultimately the most important factor in production. Given soil and sunshine, water can be provided; and Italy's colonies have plenty of sunshine.

It is a work requiring vast capital, skilful leadership, faithful industry. Why should not the new Italy provide all these in due course, an Italy which is ready to devote an undivided energy to the task? A great stock of energetic labour, of skilful leaders, she possesses already. The resources of capital will come in time. True, much of the new development in the Motherland is being financed now on foreign capital, but the

terms are such that, after allowing the worker and the organiser a fair reward, and paying interest and amortisation to the foreign investor it is calculated that there will be a surplus to build up a reservoir of Italian capital.

Certainly this is true; that if the Italian Fascist spirit can be kept constant in its faith and energy, there is no limit to be set, in reason, to the possibilities of achievement of a population of over 40 millions of intelligent, forceful people, obedient to discipline, knowing nothing of "ca' canny", nothing of the wastes caused by industrial disputes, never sulky, never idle, and always having their effort directed in consistence with a considered purpose.

The world has seen miracles wrought by small communities which were able, for some reason or other, to keep individual effort at its highest pitch for a collective purpose. The building up of the Republic of Venice was one. Picture the original site of Venice, a collection of low marshy islets at the mouth of a tidal lagoon, and it would appear the most unpromising of all possible places for the building of a great city. Yet, with all the discouragement of their apparently

hopeless situation, the Veneti not only achieved a great city but a great State, which was in its flourishing days one of the chief Powers of Europe. The Veneti were a band of refugees from Padua, which had fallen to the Northern barbarians. The mainland offered them no refuge. They begged pity of the sea and put up their little wattle-and-mud huts on the low banks of Torcello and Rivoalto, poor waste lands which the earth seemed to cast off and which the sea disdained to claim. They snatched from the sea this haunt of the seabirds, and made of it a city which at one time dominated the whole Mediterranean. They were able to do this because they were always, and in all things, for the State, and could preserve under its relentless discipline a supreme degree of individual enterprise.

The record of the Low Countries, won from the Northern Seas, is in many respects similar, and of that flourishing garden in the wilderness which the Mormons built up. The lesson in each case is the same, that there is no limit to what a community of men can do if they are ready to give to the task an energy undivided by faction, never allowing the personal to over-rule the



LAKE MAGGIORE



common advantage. It is such a community of men Italian Fascism aims to make; may be said, on the records of the last five years, to have succeeded in making. If the five years can stretch to ten, to twenty, Tripoli may dream again of its Phœnician and Roman greatness.

For the present, Italian emigration enriches chiefly other countries; and has on occasion been of direct economic disadvantage to the Mother Country, as for example when Italians abroad promoted viticulture and thus built up competition with Italy's wine production. Formerly emigrants contributed something considerable towards redressing the trade balance of their old country by sending remittances home. Those remittances now are dwindling. The Italian emigrant, becoming a citizen of his new country, loses his interest in the parent land.

This enrichment of other lands is not welcome to Italy but is accepted, for want of a better alternative. Some Italians think of the possibility of other countries allowing Italian colonisation under conditions which will allow the colonists to keep their loyalty to the old flag. It is not

easy to see where this would be possible; not in British Dominions certainly; and the Monroe doctrine of the United States would seem to forbid it on the American continent, North or South. The conditions in Tunis, to which France has agreed in the past, allowed Italian colonists some special privileges, but those conditions are threatened now. There does not seem any feasible middle solution between the Italian colonial position remaining as it is and Italy obtaining new territories directly under her flag or under her Mandate.

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As they stand to-day Italy cherishes the colonies under her flag; accepts cheerfully the financial burdens which they impose, and points with pride to the Colonial Museum at Rome as providing evidence of the good development work being done. That museum should be seen by every visitor to Rome. Its intrinsic interest is great. The industries, the cultures, of the African colonies are displayed effectively and attractively. But it has a deeper interest in the thoughts which it suggests of the revival of the ardour of civilisation of ancient Rome. Its

record is of little things, of Somali and Bedouin and Berber being taught how to improve their crops and their handicrafts and their homes. But they are in the same spirit as the work of the older Power which gave to the world the basis of the civilisation of to-day.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE TOURIST IN ITALY

*Fascism does not interfere with tourists—The charm of Italian coasts—The Alps, a Chorus to History—The visitor to Rome—Archæological work near Naples—The guardianship of ancient monuments—Venice, the sanctuary from motor cars—A perfect monument of the Renaissance—St. Mark's and the Doge's Palace.*

“FASCISMO” has not spoiled Italy for the tourist; rather otherwise. Nowadays train services have been wonderfully improved, and other public services likewise. Hotels have been put under a rigid discipline and, though you may feel sometimes that you are paying too much, at least you know clearly what charges you are incurring. The maximum rate for your room and for your meals at each hotel

must be told to you, and the rates are under the surveillance of the Prefect of the Province and cannot be arbitrarily varied. Carriage services come under the same close survey of authority.

Generally speaking the same conditions as to expensiveness apply as to other foreign countries. If you must stay at the hotel which is favoured by Americans and British—the poor British are still not differentiated from the rich Americans—you will pay for the privilege; if you are content to seek out the as-good accommodation and the sometimes-better food of the places which the Italians patronise, you can save money and be more contented. Rome, in the quarters favoured by the wealthy foreigners, is as expensive as London or Paris; in other quarters it can be distinctly economical. Provincial cities, with the reservation that you are not tied to the places with Anglo-American *clientele*, offer comfort with frugality. Even Venice, the Lido and the Italian Riviera, though offering easy opportunities to spend if you wish to spend, can give a reasonable standard of well-being at prices lower than the rest of Europe. The State railways organisation

known as E.N.I.T. provides the traveller with an official list of reliable hotels, and their prices, at all the chief centres.

The traveller need have no anxiety that there will be trying ordeals at the frontier of suspicious and scrupulous examination by "Black Shirts". He may never see a Black Shirt in all Italy, unless he goes to some public demonstration. The Customs officers are courteous and helpful. There is no need for anxious care as to whether in your baggage there should have strayed something in the way of a book or a newspaper of which Fascismo would not approve. The odds are that your baggage will never be examined, and if your favourite author is some Dr. Marie Stopes on the subject of Birth Control, the fact will never be noticed, and her masterpiece on *Marriage Without Encumbrances* will remain in your trunk to comfort your reading hours. The *colporteur* of any banned propaganda, who deliberately tries to introduce forbidden literature or forbidden articles, will be almost certainly found out in due course, and have an uncomfortable time. The traveller who, without being a propagandist is yet not a full subscriber to the Fascist "regime

of virtue" will not find any interference with his (or her) individual tastes.

Provided that a visitor has no subversive political object, he can go in and out of Italy and move about there with the same freedom as in England, and know nothing of the police, except their courtesy and helpfulness. The "political police", from what I heard, are notably efficient—since they have practically the whole population of the country as their allies it is easy to be—and probably they are kept well informed about all visitors; but the innocent tourist will never hear of them, never know that they exist. The higher standard of courtesy of public servants is, in fact, one of the achievements of the Fascist regime. It is a courtesy which does not depend upon, nor expect, "tips"; and it is obviously founded on the wish to give strangers a good impression of this Italy of To-day. Rome has, like most modern cities, a "traffic problem", and to meet it there are some rather complicated "one way transit" regulations. The manner in which these are administered by the gendarmerie is a model of patient courtesy.

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Political changes, in short, have done nothing to interfere with the traveller's joy in Italy as a land of great natural loveliness. Set like a long brooch in the bosom of the blue Mediterranean, her coast-line offers to the eye, here the refreshment of beautiful bays such as that of Naples, or those of the Italian Riviera; there the majesty of towering forest-crowned cliffs; there the luminous beauty of a chain of lagoons such as shelter Venice. Almost always the water of the sea glows. The Mediterranean can have its hours of anger and its days of melancholy, but customarily on the coast of Italy smiles back to sunny sky a gay greeting.

In this one respect alone of her bright setting in the blue Mediterranean, Italy is favoured much by fortune. Mountains, plains and lakes come to help in making scenes of natural beauty which may not be surpassed in the world. But with all this distinction of natural beauty, of sea and mountain and valley, lake and river, it is more true of Italy than of any other country that her landscapes draw worshippers from all corners of the world, not so much because of beauty of form and foliage and eager response of warm

earth to warm sky, but because of the human interest of her soil.

It is the human interest which is the chief element in our pleasure in a landscape. Sometimes a scene, which is of wonder as well as of beauty, in which Nature exacts surprise as well as admiration, will win the tribute of a general and continued admiration. Ordinarily, only landscapes which human genius has enriched with memory claim constant crowds of worshippers. Human beings, we are most deeply interested when our human affairs are concerned, and greet with awe and affection a scene of natural beauty only when we can people the stage which it presents with great creatures of our own flesh and recall that, "Here a hero stood", or, "There the poet who saw deep into the souls of men walked".

That makes the chief charm of Italy. Those great snow-clad peaks, flushing to the morning greeting of the sun, or showing a cold, virginal beauty under the light of the moon, are in themselves beautiful. But there are in the world other mountains as beautiful. Nature is lavish with such gifts of form. But there are no other

mountains where one may feel to the same extent that:

Sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

Looking up from the plains of Lombardy to the crests of the guardian Alps, or from the mountain passes gazing down upon those plains, the Pageant of Civilisation comes up to our eyes. We see Hannibal, filled with a fierce hatred for the Roman Republic, leading his Mercenaries to grapple with the detested enemy on his very hearth, the warlike pomp of the swarthy Punic hosts marred and tattered by the storms and snows of the rampart mountains. Or we picture the wild Gauls with their Druid priests pouring down the passes, to plunder and devastate the rich civilisation growing up under the practical and ordered life of the Roman Power. Or we behold the avenger of civilisation in the first Cæsar, taming the mountains with good roads, and making their passage no longer a thing of dread and difficulty, but

part of the habit of life for his civilising Legions.

After the Roman Power had failed, the Alps gazed with same serenity on the barbarian hordes rushing to the ravage of Italy—the Goths, the Vandals, and the Huns led by “the Scourge of God”, fierce, squat little barbarians from the Steppes of Asia. Then, later, when on the ashes of the secular Roman Empire had risen the Empire of the Roman Church, these Alps saw many a pompous procession of worldly and priestly pride, with Rome again the centre of the world, all roads leading to her temples. The Alps thus are not a mere range of mountains but a Chorus to History—sitting in calm review of the great events of the world, seeing the rise of Powers of Light and Powers of Darkness, associated in some wise with almost every great event and great name in the record of Man. They are the monuments of Hannibal, of Cæsar, of Attila, of Charlemagne, of Napoleon, witnesses alike to the vanity of human personal ambition and to the greatness of human collective action.

And crossing the guardian Alps, the pilgrim from abroad entering Italy is on the threshold

of the dearest shrines of his civilisation. One may imagine him coming from the United States, from some great modern city which was tenanted by a few wandering Indians through the ages whilst the Roman Republic was being nursed to greatness, whilst that Roman Empire was dissolving before the barbarians, whilst the Renaissance was bringing a new dawn to world civilisation ; and, in a real sense, he will find here in Italy the monuments and records of all the things that enter most deeply into life in his American city. The laws under which he lives are largely the children of Roman codes. The Christian religion which he professes established itself chiefly here in Italy, and from here sent out preachers to all the then known world. The commercial system, the civic organisation, and the engineering conquests over Nature of which his modern city is proud, had their origins in Italy. No land has such an appeal to the interest and the affection of Man.

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The tourist of to-day who wishes to mingle with old interest some observation of the work-

ing of the new regime, should make Rome his headquarters. There he may note the better care of ancient monuments; such signs of modern progress as model workmen's houses; and that Italian architecture of to-day has passed out of the degeneration of the past quarter of a century and is showing (in such buildings as the new Ministry of Justice) another Renaissance. Several of the monuments of classical Rome which had been lost by the over-growth of squalid tenements, are being restored to sight.

Rome for a lengthy visit is a little fatiguing, and yet demands a lengthy visit if any real knowledge of it is sought. I should suggest, for the comfort of the tourist, to break his stay with week-end visits to such near-by towns as Frascati, Tivoli or Anzio on the sea coast. Anzio, little known to foreigners, is very attractive and restful—the ruins of Nero's Palace for archæological interest, the fleet of sailing boats and the good bathing beach for simpler joys.

After Rome, Naples, the favoured holiday resort of the Roman patrician since before the time

of Julius Cæsar, the refuge to-day from harsher climes of poets, statesmen, captains of industry. The Bay of Naples, with its city, its towns and its mountains, has a record as a place of pleasure unmatched in all the world. Under the burning sun, before the gay waters of the Bay, many generations have passed, always of pleasure-seekers, of pleasure-lovers. Sometimes a shriek of terror or of agony has broken into the current of laughter for a moment, but for a moment only. The dance of life was soon resumed. Vesuvius might frown, or a human tyrant show a pettier, more meticulous cruelty. Naples never allowed the note of gaiety to be for long interrupted. The volcano, its burning torch dominating the smiling bay, suggests Naples' character with its gaiety, its touch of hot passion, of dormant cruelty; better perhaps the volcano at the dawn of the Christian era, when gay gardens ran up to its very crater, when it was thought to be extinct but was only slumbering.

Naples' villas and streets are incomparably rich in memories of the literary, musical and intellectual life of the world. It is the city in a special sense of Virgil and Cicero. That eminent musician,

Nero, (who was perhaps not as bad a fiddler as the extravagant praise of his courtiers would have us believe) was fond of playing in the concert hall of Naples. Nearly all the great men of the Renaissance were associated in some way with this gay southern city, the more raffish of them, such as Cellini and Boccaccio, the more closely—as was natural, seeing its immemorial character as a pleasure city. In modern times almost every poet, essayist, novelist of note has visited Naples and written of her charm, French writers in particular, Lamartine, Sainte-Beuve, De Musset, Theophile Gautier and others.

A proof of the progressive policy of economic development in Italy is the opening this year of a new direct railway from Rome to Naples. The old round-about way was *via* Cassino and Capua. The new railway will open up a rich agricultural district and provide much easier communication with the world's most famous seaside resort. But, if time allows and one likes the sea, travel to Naples by sailing boat from Aosta or Anzio. It is an enchanting journey, to be done between dawn and sunset of a long day if the breeze is fresh.

Fresh interest awaits the visitor to Naples in the excavations of the old site of Herculaneum begun in May, 1927. Fascist Italy is devoting much energy to the uncovering of ancient monuments, energy which is only governed by one condition, that there must be no intrusive foreign interference; the work is Italy's and must be left in Italian hands. Fascism has not invented but merely intensified this feeling. It existed before. They tell a story of the late King Edward VII which illustrates it. A wealthy American, eager to devote some of his money to the good work of archæological research in Italy, enlisted the sympathy of his President and was armed with a letter endorsing and supporting some particular scheme of excavation he had in mind. The then German Emperor, too, proved sympathetic, and gave the project his blessing. When the British monarch was approached, he was suavely but firmly determined to say or write nothing at all about the project.

“It is purely,” he said, “a matter for my brother of Italy. I cannot presume to dictate to him or advise him.”

King Edward's cautiousness was sound. The project, when it came to be published, aroused resentment in Italy, as constituting a foreign interference with a purely Italian matter. Those personages who had come forward to support it found themselves involved in the awkwardness of a tactless project.

Fascist Italy emphasises the sturdy spirit of guardianship over national treasures of art and archæology. There are in every country, but most of all in Italy, objects which, though they may have fallen into the hands of individuals or of societies, and become thus, in a sense, "private property" yet belong most truly to the people at large. Their associations with the history and the life of the community make it an impiety to remove them from their native surroundings.

Yet this is an impiety of which our modern civilisation is fond—is, indeed, in its mistaken sense of things, often rather proud. Rich people in many parts of the world set themselves the task of "collecting", to amuse their leisure and to exhaust their money; and whilst much of this "collecting" is honourable enough, some of it

is desecratory. To attempt to take from a country a monument that is an integral part of her history shows not an appreciation of art or of antiquity, but rather an instinct of greed.

Italy at one time was the happy-hunting ground of the sort of collector who is willing to rifle tombs and desecrate fanes to gratify a vulgar acquisitiveness. Now the monuments and archæological treasures there are better guarded than those of any other country, better guarded, for instance, than those of England. In 1903 and 1909 legislation prohibited the exportation of any works of national historical or art interest. Objects—immovable or movable—of interest for history, archæology, palæontology, or art, when belonging to public bodies, are inalienable, but may pass by sale from one such body to another by leave of the Minister of Public Instruction. When such objects are private property, and the owners have been notified by the authorities of their national importance, no sale or alienation is permitted without notification to the Minister of Public Instruction. If a contract of sale has been drawn up, the Government has the

right to purchase the object at the price agreed in the contract; any sale privately effected in contravention of these provisions is null and void. The possessor of a work of art of any kind who wishes to export it must give notice to the Government, when it will be decided whether it is of a character to make it of national interest. The Government may, if it choose, purchase the work at the price demanded by the exporter or impose a condition that it must be kept within the kingdom and maintained in a proper condition. If a monument in private hands is suffering damage, and the proprietor will not take measures of preservation, the Government can resume it.

Such legislation, despite its interference with the rights of private property, is justifiable, for the rage to "collect" in these days goes to strange excesses. The palace where Wagner died at Venice was for a period kept open to the public by the owner. He was willing that admirers of the great musician should pay their respects to Wagner's memory in his death-chamber. But he found that the movable articles in the palace were being pillaged by curio-hunters. When

these were baulked in that direction by the removal of all ornaments and curtains they attacked the wood-work of the furniture, of the floors, of the walls. The privilege of entering the palace finally had to be withdrawn. The rabid vulgarity of a few inflicted that penalty on the many.

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The visitor to Naples may not hope to come across in these days any traces of the Camorra. That body, discouraged before, now comes within the rigours of special Fascist laws against secret societies. The Camorra was a great trade union of criminals and would-be criminals, recruited from the discontented and the lazy and the thoughtless. Its idea was as old as the Conspiracy of Catiline, which in its turn was probably as old as the founding of the first big city of any of the world's civilisations. The Camorra appealed to those who were poor to organise so as to levy upon those who were rich. Blackmail, theft, brigandage, murder came within its scope. The rank and file probably got very little real benefit from the Camorra, which fed fat only its leaders;

but the organisation appealed to their desire for revenge on a social system which did not treat them very kindly; and revenge, as Bacon says, is “a kind of wild justice”.

The Camorra to-day is practically extinct; and the Mafia of Sicily, an organisation of even more bloodthirsty resoluteness, is also passing away. In older days the Mafia was the defence of the Sicilian peasant against his tyrants, the organisation by which he could answer injustice with assassination. It survived the era of United Italy as an organisation to shield private crime, to encourage sedition and to levy upon thrift. Fascism has carried on an intensive campaign against it, and has wisely reinforced repressive methods with steps to improve the material conditions of the Sicilian peasantry.

Under Fascism, Venice remains a sanctuary from motor cars, the proposal to carry a traffic road across the lagoons having been abandoned, for the time being at any rate. It is developing greatly as a commercial port, but the development has in no way interfered with its beauty;

the only spoiling thing of late is the invasion of some of the canals by motor boats. The traveller will find it still a perfect monument of a great era, that of the Renaissance.

Venice, unlike Rome, does not mingle Renaissance with classical monuments; nor did it suffer, as did Rome, 400 years ago from that shameful sack of modern barbarians, the "Imperialist" Germans and Spaniards (Benvenuto Cellini in his Autobiography says a good deal about that tragedy, but naturally he is most interested to tell of his own personal heroism in helping to defend the Castle of St. Angelo). Modern civilisation has not yet been able to change Venice. The World War left it almost untouched—I had a glimpse in 1919 of the city in sandbags, all the most notable buildings protected against the bombs of air-raiders. It remains, a full story in stone of the rise of the Renaissance from the ruins of the Roman Empire.

That Roman Empire knew not Venice, which was founded in the days of its Decline, when refugees found there in the lagoons a poor retreat, pitiful huts on marshy islands, where they had

to live as the sea-birds did, but with safety from the barbarians. Soon the Veneti aspired to more than a mere existence. The mud-islands were found to be cultivable with some protection against the sea, and yielded good crops. The islanders built ships and began to trade with the mainland of Italy, and with the countries on the shores of the Adriatic. Solid houses replaced the wattle-and-daub huts, and it is because those houses reflected step by step the progress of Venice and the various phases of the Renaissance of civilisation that Venice is now so interesting. Its stones give with clearness the record of the late Roman and Byzantine civilisations, of the intrusions of Arabic influences into Europe following the conquests of Saracens and Turks, of the growth of the revived Italian culture, and of the movements in contemporary civilisations sympathetic with the Renaissance.

The record is not only clear; it is also exceedingly rich, for the Venetians were great robbers, and put under tribute every land their merchant ships touched. During the Thirteenth Century, for instance, a law was passed compelling every Venetian merchant returning from a voyage to

bring back some gift for the building of St. Mark's—marble, or jewel or enamel. Thus Venice's church became a vast repository of votive offerings gleaned from every part of the world—usually by robbery. The Republic willed it and the merchants obeyed. For their church other churches in almost every corner of the Mediterranean were despoiled.

To-day to know the mind of Venice—and of the Renaissance in Italy—the traveller need only study closely St. Mark's, and after that the Doge's Palace.

St. Mark's is a museum of sculpture of all kinds from the work of the Fourth Century to the latest Renaissance. The walls are completely faced with either glass mosaics on gold grounds, or with precious marbles and porphyries. Plain white marble is used only for sculpture, and even then is often thickly inlaid with gold. The first impression it gives is of a cavern of gold encrusted with precious stones, a fairy palace of an Arabian Nights tale.

But St. Mark's with all its beauty, its gem-like radiance, is little like a Christian fane. There is more suggestion of faith and worship in the

gloomy vault-like interior of a Gothic church such as St. Gudule, Brussels, offering a feast of colour only in its jewel windows, through which one sees, as it were, a glimpse of the Paradise of the next world from the darkness of this. St. Mark's is a monument of pride, not of Christian humility. It would be more fitting as the mosque of a war-like Islam or the temple of a voluptuous Paganism, or the shrine of a new Nietzschean faith.

In truth, the Venetians who built St. Mark's had little faith except in themselves, little aspiration except to exalt the material wealth and power of their city, little scruple to fight either for or against Christian ideals as the advantage of the moment suggested. St. Mark's thus has no piety, nothing of the spiritual suggestiveness of a cathedral like St. Ouen or of those simple spires of English village churches pointing eloquent fingers to Heaven. It reflects Renaissance Italy, glorying in the return to Pagan culture and a little uncertain as to whether God really is, but willing to give Him, on the chance that He exists, tribute—the tribute of a stolen jewel. It has no evidence of a coherent idea, no suggestion that the Venetians

thought of a Supreme Power directing the Universe in order and symmetry.

Now the Doge's Palace is very different. There you may note ordered plan, a coherent idea strongly expressed with a great dignity of form and no frippery of useless ornament. The Venetian, if he doubted about God, believed in Venice, aimed to make his city the Supreme Power, and built its shrine with real piety.

Venice in all her beauties shows æstheticism divorced from spiritual feeling. The pride of the mind, the pomp of power, the joy of the flesh, these are recorded everywhere, with oft a hint of cruelty, of Lamia beauty. But the kindly sea envelopes all in a faint haze, luminous and softening, which merges the reds and purples and golds of lusts and prides and greeds into ordered pomp of colour.

There are two very beautiful and yet cruel landscapes of civilisation. One is that of Venice. The other that of the harbour front of New York, with the great "sky-scrappers" suggesting the eyries of a new race of rapacious barons.

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Space does not permit a complete tourist voyage around Italy. For the rest it will suffice to say that Fascism has made no difference, except for the better, in Italy from a tourist's point of view. The old scenes of beauty remain; some fresh interests have been added.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE FUTURE

*Can Italy give up Fascism?—The problem of Mussolini's successor—What will happen when this young generation grows up?—The new Italy must be aggressive—The economic development of the future.*

FASCISM, fairly judged on the evidence, even when the examination of that evidence is opened in a spirit of some suspicion and a little resentment, has done great work in regenerating Italy. The Italy of to-day is separated from the Italy of yesterday by a Rubicon the passage of which has restored good order, prosperity, seemliness. Where there were confusion, decay and indignity, there are discipline, progress and a high national pride. Some, without doubt, have suffered, some good men who still

stubbornly held to the hope that, despite all experience to the contrary, there was a sound future for their country under the old conditions of "popular government". For these men—exiles chiefly—one must have sympathy, even though perhaps not sharing their conviction that a method of government deserves the higher loyalty than the practical interests of a nation. They are a dwindling remnant—there is announced often the conversion of old opponents of Fascism—but are mostly men of honest conviction and to be respected accordingly. To the mass of the Italian people the new regime has given great benefits at the price of no apparent sacrifices. If they have lost liberties they are not conscious of the fact; indeed seem to have a higher pride in their status as citizens of Italy than they had before.

The future of Italy thus depends, I am convinced, on the success of Fascism. If that breaks down it is hard to imagine the people turning with hope to any other policy. They will feel that they have tried with their utmost strength, and—if the result is failure—disillusion, discouragement, something akin to despair will

follow. That is not to say necessarily Fascism as it exists to-day, but Fascism in the sense that Mussolini has described in a searchlight phrase, "Faith is an infallible compass for every ideal voyage"; in the sense of faith in Italy, and willingness to make personal sacrifice of vanity and sloth to prove that faith by good work for Italy. Fascism has sloughed away its early disorganised violence. It may be hoped, as it grows to the strength of maturity, that it will slough away also some of its active interferences with liberty of speech and of writing (from its nature it must always maintain a spiritual intolerance of any word or action which diminishes love of country); and that the future Fascism may feel itself strong enough to find silent contempt the better remedy for some faults than exile or imprisonment.

Fascism has been a developing creed—*pace* the efforts of some enthusiasts to see it as springing full-grown from the Jovian brain as far back as 1919. It is not the same to-day as it was yesterday, and will not be the same to-morrow. Its one vital principle, that duty to the State comes before individual rights, is not so narrow as to

restrict a considerable lateral development, though it can never become latitudinarian.

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The personal factor does not necessarily impose a short life on Fascism, though it is greatly dependent on Mussolini. His spirit has made it, irrespective of what sources of inspiration he had from the Roman Republic, the Renaissance and the Risorgimento; and his spirit must guard its infancy. But if the misfortune should happen that Mussolini were suddenly taken away, there is provision, I am told, that his "political testament" will nominate to the King a successor, and that, on the strength of that nomination, the Fascisti would give loyalty to this man as representing the spirit of Mussolini. But in the ordinary course of events Mussolini, now 42, can be expected to have at least 20 years left of vigorous life. After then?

There is probably in his mind, and in the minds of those around him, the idea of a revival of that system of the Roman Empire of which Gibbon wrote: "If a man were called on to fix the period in the history of the world in which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous,

he would without hesitation name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus". That system was the "Adoptive System" which gave to Rome as rulers in succession, Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius. Rome, having by good fortune secured one great ruler, gave to him full power, and when he had exercised power wisely and well for a number of years, entrusted to him the task of adopting as his successor the man whom he thought most fitting to carry on his work—this man not by any means necessarily his son or related to him by blood. The system rejected popular election of a ruler as absurd and it recognised that a wise father may have a foolish son; but believed that a great and good ruler could, in the maturity of his judgment, choose a worthy successor. The system gave to the Roman world for a century excellent rulers; and ceased when Marcus Aurelius, instead of adopting a successor, left the power to be inherited by his son, Commodus, and a satyr followed a sage.

Italian Fascism, I think, will follow that precedent, and confide to Mussolini the task, in due course, of "adopting" the next Prime Minister

—the next Dictator. Mussolini has shown lately quiet wisdom in the choice of his lieutenants; has shown, too, a growing disposition to allow to these lieutenants a real measure of authority. It is no longer the rule that in every important event Mussolini must make a public appearance as leader. His mind still controls all decisions, but the announcement of those decisions, and the credit for them, is often allowed to subordinates. In that secret "political testament", or in some open announcement of the future will the right man be nominated?

It is, of course, impossible to say with certainty. An encouraging indication is that there are, so far, no signs of nepotism in Mussolini's administration. He has relations; they have not been put into any high public offices. The story current at one time that he was seeking a royal alliance for his daughter was never believed by his intimates, and has been lately proved to be untrue.

The crucial test of the permanence of Fascism will come, in my opinion, when the present school boys have grown to adult age. They are being educated, trained to be Fascists, to

follow the ideal of duty to the State rather than personal liberty, personal ambition. Will their response to that training be generally one of conformity or one of rebellion? The definite answer must await the years; at present one can only speculate.

That speculation must not blink the fact that conformity can only come with a complete change-over from the attitude of mind which is generally accepted to-day in countries of the Western civilisation, and which is being sedulously preached in other countries as the one true Evangel of progress. That attitude of mind was very clearly stated by Mr. Root in another Capitol—that of Albany, New York—in 1915 (before Italian Fascism was known to the world outside of Italy):

There are but two underlying theories of man in the social relation to the State: One is the theory of the ancient Republics, under which the State is the starting point from which rights are deduced, and the individual holds rights only as a member of the State. That was the theory of Greece, and Rome, and the Italian Republics. The other is the theory of the *Magna Charta*, the theory of the *Habeas Corpus* Act, of the Statute of Treasons, of the Petition of Rights, of the Bill of Rights, of the Massachusetts Body of Liberties, of the Declara-

tion of Independence of the American Republic, that the individual has inalienable rights, of which no Government may deprive him, but to secure which all government exists.

There could be no clearer statement of the antithesis between the two theories of politics; and the first theory, that of the ancient Republics, is the theory of Fascism, which could be well defined in one phrase, as a flat contradiction of the essence of the American Declaration of Independence. Fascism, to be permanently acceptable to the Italian, or any other people, must therefore clear their minds of the political theory and records of practice of several generations of Western peoples. It is thus, as I suggested at the outset, far more revolutionary than Bolshevism, which is merely a slum riot on a large scale. It demands of Man a new habit of thought, and the rejection of many ideas which had come to be accepted as indisputable axioms. It is to politics somewhat as the Einstein theory to physics.

Whilst, therefore, there seems no reason in domestic politics why Mussolini, whilst he keeps life and vigour, should not maintain his present

power; no reason why he should not be able to pass on that power to an "adopted" successor, as Nerva to Trajan and Trajan to Hadrian; the only point of doubt is whether the "*Ballila*" will grow up to be good Fascists, regarding duties before rights, or whether, removed as they will be from immediate memory of the Slough of Despond out of which Fascism has raised Italy, they will sigh after the mind-pots of Liberalism.

. . . . .

In regard to foreign politics, the outlook is not quite so clear as I have endeavoured to indicate—one must walk like a cat on hot bricks in discussing current issues of foreign politics. It will need supreme ability and caution to safeguard the new Italy against a damaging collision in foreign relations. This new Italy is a young, growing and therefore necessarily an Imperialist-minded Power, like the United States (which *is* that, in spite of her own view of herself—sincere possibly in the minds of the mass of her voters—as a Quaker in foreign affairs). The conception of the United States as pursuing, in happy contrast to wicked Europe, a simple and unselfish national life, with no desire for expansion, no

thought of interfering with the affairs of others, in the world but not of the world, is nonsense. Nations, like individuals, are governed by biological laws. A disposition to make anxious sacrifices to the gods who grant peace is the sign of old age; a young, strong nation is as naturally aggressive and ambitious as a young, strong boy. The new Italy is bound to show an inclination for a forward foreign policy. Unfortunately the most obvious fields in which that will show are the Balkans and Asia Minor, and they are the two most dangerous fields for adventure in the world.

The fate of Fascist Italy thus may be adversely affected by some untoward development in foreign affairs. If so it will be a misfortune for her, and for the world at large, which, apart from the affection all civilised men must have for Italy as their second Motherland, has an interest to see tried out without the interference of a war accident, this experiment to "materialise patriotism in duty".

• • • • •

In regard to the economic development of the future, there is no room for doubt. Fascism has

brought to Italy economy and efficiency of administration in public and private enterprise. It has already achieved wonders; it will, if undisturbed, make Italy one of the most formidable competitors in the world's industries. This conclusion is not founded on any over-optimistic calculations that "white coal"—the only great natural resource, except the land, which Italy possesses—can, under present conditions of hydro-electrical knowledge, make black coal obsolete. It is questionable whether on principles of strict cost accountancy power from water is cheaper in Italy than power from coal. Whilst its development is an advantage from a national point of view—if there is accepted the Protectionist case that a home product is better than a foreign product even though it costs a little more—it will not prove a factor of supreme importance in industrial development. The factor of supreme importance will be the superior discipline and the higher energy of the nation for its tasks. Labour, in its widest sense of organising and mechanical effort, is the source of most wealth. A nation which cuts out Labour discontents cuts

out the greatest of the world's wastes of to-day.

• • • •

In regard to the artistic and intellectual development of the future, what is the prospect of Italy under Fascism? Of the artistic development there is no cause for anxiety. Present indications show a quickening of artistic impulse under the new regime, and there must be a rich harvest of advantage in the future from the importance given now in the educational system to the æsthetic side of life.

Of the intellectual development, I hesitate to speak with the same certainty. Will Fascism, by its repression of doubt, of discontent, clamp the Italian mind in a strait-jacket?

Beginning this volume I suggested that Fascist Italy demanded a people of the Socrates type without Socrates' habit of asking awkward questions. The conception which Mussolini has of the duty of man to the State might have been taken direct from Socrates, when in prison and facing the prospect of death on an unjust accusation. His friends arranged for his escape. He refused to go, saying to them that the duty

of the citizen was to obey and serve his State in all earthly matters:

Our country is more to be valued and higher and holier far than mother or father or any ancestor, and more to be regarded in the eyes of the gods and of men of understanding: also to be gently and reverently entreated when angry, even more than a father, and if not persuaded, obeyed. And when we are punished by her, whether with imprisonment or stripes, the punishment is to be endured in silence: and if she lead us to wounds or death in battle, thither we follow as is right: neither may any one yield or retreat or leave his rank, but whether in battle or in a court of law, or in any other place, he must do what his country order him: or he must change their view of what is just: and if he may do no violence to his father or mother, much less may he do violence to his country. For the laws will say to him: "After having brought you into the world and nurtured and educated you, and given you and every other citizen a share in every good which we had to give, we have further proclaimed to every citizen that if he does not like us when he has come of age and has seen the ways of the State, he may go where he pleases and take his goods with him, and we will not forbid him nor interfere with him. But he who has had experience of the manner in which we order justice and administer the State, and still remains, has entered into a contract that he will do what we command him. And he who disobeys us is thrice wrong: firstly because, in disobeying us, he is disobeying his parents: secondly,

because we are the authors of his education: thirdly, because he has made an agreement with us that he will duly obey our commands."

But on the other side, the spiritual, the intellectual side, this, the wisest and greatest of men, questioned everything, admitted no authority but his own conscience. Would Fascist Italy allow Socrates, brave soldier in war, dutiful unto death to the State in all material things, make his quest for truth in the Forum of Italy to-day? Probably not. A future, a more mature Fascism, perhaps yes—a Fascism which will distinguish between discipline in those things which are due unto Cæsar and freedom in those things which are due unto God. If not, then Italy, and the world, will gain much from this great experiment in organisation, but will lose much which Italy might have given to the growth of the mind of man.

THE END

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